FRAZETTA

#42

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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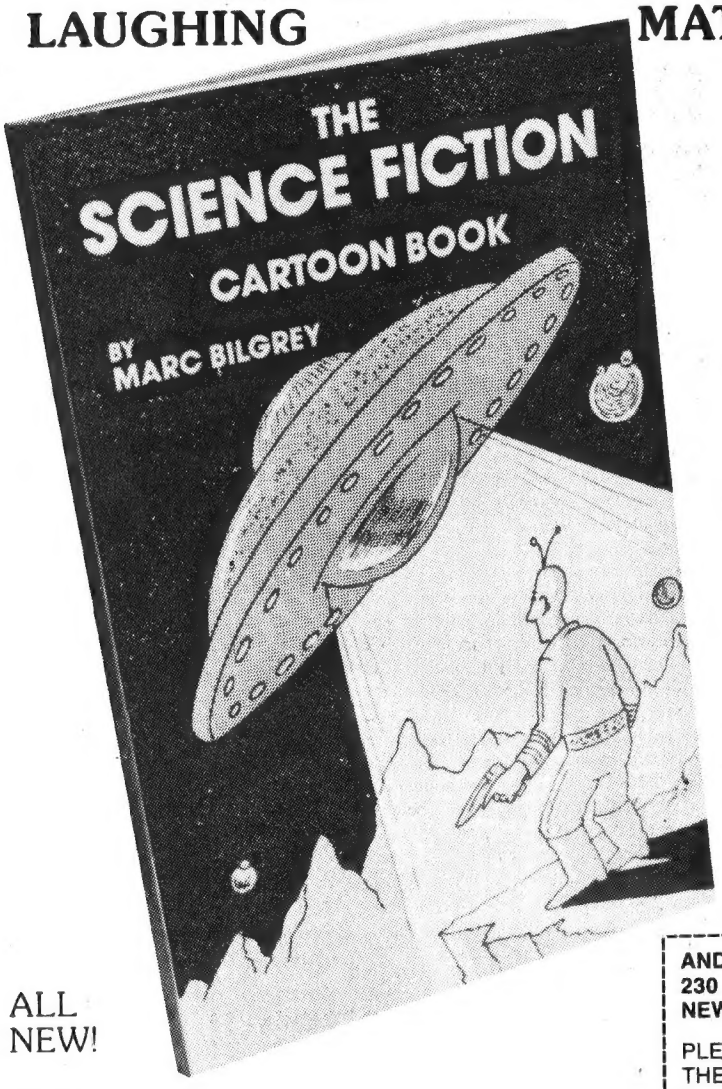

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UP FRONT

One of the great things about being the publisher of COMICS INTERVIEW is the kick I get out of seeing such creative stalwarts and longtime favorites of mine as *Jack Kirby* and *Frank Frazetta* interviewed here in these pages.

For many years, I have credited *Edgar Rice Burroughs* as the catalyst, the influence, that started a chain reaction of events which have shaped my life — from editor to writer to publisher. Certainly, his vivid stories swept me up into a world of imagination, a world I have made my reality.

But in his interview, *Frank Frazetta* makes a statement about his cover paintings for the paperback editions of *Robert E. Howard's* CONAN, wonders whether they may not have been the real reason readers picked up the books. That observation, in turn, got me thinking back to the very first ERB book I picked off a newsstand, an Ace edition of TARZAN AND THE LION MAN. Swimming in a sea of other paperback covers, I believe it was the power of the *Frazetta* painting which attracted my attention.

And so I've come to realize, after all these years, that I might never even have picked up the first *Edgar Rice Burroughs* paperback but for Frank. In that tenuous chain of events which influences our lives, but for *Frank Frazetta* I might not have come to be publishing a magazine called COMICS INTERVIEW. You can see now why it's such a kick to see him interviewed here!

The impact of a creator's work can be far-reaching and yet, paradoxically, invisible to him. Working all alone in a room, drawing upon the imagination to create fantasy images, it is almost impossible to understand the tangible effects that occur as a result out in the "real" world.

I wonder how many other lives, in equally invisible yet very real ways, have been shaped by *Frazetta*?

-Dave

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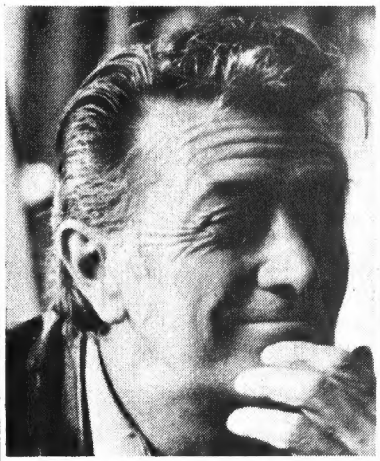
ARTIST:
FRANK FRAZETTA



the painter non-pareil pulls no punches! from comics art to artless competitors, a far-ranging rap with *steve ringgenberg*

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"The EMISSARY will make greater de-

STEVE RINGGENBERG

Steve Ringgenberg is one of my favorite authors, but I don't read much; in fact, I'm just learning English.

Steve and I met some eleven years ago, working at Camp Adventure; no, really, Camp Adventure, and history was made. But I can't talk about that.

Over the past few years, Steve has worked for every major comics company and a few minor ones.

In between scripts and editing jobs, ("Sleep!?" he shouts, spittle flying, "Sleep is for bears and grandpa after Thanksgiving dinner!") Steve likes to do interviews. Here's a small sampling of the people he's talked to — Al Williamson, Jack Davis, Harvey Kurtzman, Michael Kaluta, Jules Feiffer, Frank Frazetta and, of course, Voltaire.

So why interview this guy?

Just because he's now Associate Editor for Byron Preiss Visual Productions? Just because he and his partner have sold their own comics series? Just because I'm his partner?

Nah.

It's because he's a pro.

MATTHEW JORGENSEN: *You're not exactly a big-name writer in comics, Steve — not yet, anyway. Have you had any critical acclaim?*

STEVE RINGGENBERG: R.A. Jones reviewed NIGHTVEIL #2 and #3 and said that, as far as the dialogue and the story went, it was about as competent and professional as an average issue of SPIDER-MAN, which I took to be faint praise indeed.

MATTHEW: *Do you think it was out of line?*

STEVE: No, actually, I feel that criticism was very valid. I don't think the writing was as good as I'm capable of now. To tell you the truth, I enjoyed NIGHTVEIL, but if I were handling another character in a setting that dealt with magic and the occult I would probably do it a lot differently.

MATTHEW: *How?*

STEVE: Less like a super-hero strip and with more . . . mystery and eeriness of the occult that actually exists. I have done a lot of reading on the occult and various aspects of ritual and magic and things like this, and I believe there are forces out there that science can't really explain — just random occurrences and, well, physical forces that are not easily explained by contemporary physics — but I also think that as time goes on and scientists delve further and further into the nature of reality — even in areas like astronomy and anthropology — they're going to find a point where everything sort of meets,

All art accompanying this interview is © 1986 Ringgenberg & Jorgensen, unless otherwise noted.

mands on the intelligence of the readers."

PHOTO: Paul Ringgenberg

Steve Ringgenberg displays the inner poise which has made him successful.

"I'm handling magic as an undiscovered

that once you break matter down beyond a certain level, everything is energy. I think magic is simply one aspect of that.

Below: A panel from Steve's new series THE EMISSARY. Opposite: Nightveil.

Things like thought transference and telekinesis, I believe they do exist. I wouldn't say right now that my beliefs extend as far as like, you know, believing in flying saucers. I think flying saucers are *something* — but I don't necessarily believe that they are flying saucers.

MATTHEW: *What do you mean?*

STEVE: Well, I don't think they're little silver saucers filled with green men from other planets. From what I've read, I've concluded that UFOs, whatever they are, are some manifestation of energy. They've been recorded in hieroglyphics and various manuscripts, you know, from virtually every culture in the world, and they've been perceived in different ways.

MATTHEW: *You're discussing magic in a form I think most people are unfamiliar with. I get the impression many people feel that magic is either voodoo dolls or it's DR. STRANGE.*

STEVE: Which is **Steve Ditko** doing surrealism on a comics page.

MATTHEW: *Sure, and he did it very well.*

STEVE: Yes. I love those old **Ditko** DR. STRANGEs. Great stuff. But to get back to your point, the way I'm handling magic in THE EMISSARY — which has strong overtones of magic and fantasy, even though it's a science-fiction strip — I'm handling magic as an undiscovered branch of physics, and like physics it has its own laws of cause and effect. We're trying to do magic within those laws, so that things will have a self-justifying logic. I don't want to have my characters with magic pulling rabbits out of thin air because that's simply impossible. None of the bullshit. No energy bolts flying through the air.

MATTHEW: *How do you handle the magic, then?*

STEVE: The magic, what there is of it,

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Steven C. Ringgenberg
Born: 20 September 1957–Fayetteville, NC
Residence: New York City

Education: B.A. in Creative Writing. Graduated University of Arizona in 1979.
Occupation: Freelance Writer and Editor.
Credits: I started writing professionally in 1980. My first sale was to DC: a one-pager that appeared in HOUSE OF MYSTERY. Since then I've had numerous comics scripts and interviews in HEAVY METAL. Many interviews in COMICS INTERVIEW, Russ Cochran's EC Library, THE COMICS JOURNAL, AMAZING HEROES, etc.

My comics scripts have appeared in MOON KNIGHT, WEIRD WAR TALES, THE BLACK HOOD, NEW TALENT SHOWCASE and Americomics' BOLT and NIGHTVEIL. I am currently writing THE EMISSARY, a bimonthly science-fiction comic published by Electric Comics. I am involved in a number of comics-related projects for Byron Preiss Visual Publications, where I am an associate editor and writer. I am also developing a SYNWULFE miniseries with George Pratt.

Favorite Artists: Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Roy Krenkel, Hal Foster, Alex Raymond, Milton Caniff, Noel Sickles, Alex Toth, Dave Stevens, Jack Kirby, Matt Jorgensen and George Pratt.
Favorite Comics Writers: Harvey Pekar, Alan Moore, Archie Goodwin, Mike Baron and the Hernandez Brothers.
Favorite Writer-Artists: Robert Crumb, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Eisner.
Favorite Films: KING KONG, DR. STRANGELOVE, 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, TAXI DRIVER, THE WILD BUNCH, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, BLADERUNNER, LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS, RIDE THE HIGH COUNTRY.
Favorite Authors: Ernest Hemingway, Anthony Burgess, Philip K. Dick and Vance Bourjaily.
Favorite Comics: The EC Comics line. They've never been surpassed in terms of quality. I also like Moore's WATCHMEN, Eisner's SPIRIT, AMERICAN SPLENDOR and WEIRDO.
Favorite President: Theodore Roosevelt, because he created our national park system.
Pet Peeve: Bullies of every stripe, from dictators and gangsters to editors like Mort Weisinger.

branch of physics. . .cause and effect."

is gonna be on a non-verbal level; and if we ever depict a magical happening it's gonna be done in such a way in the context of the strip that you know it is an other reality. The panel borders and the way the drawing and coloring is executed is gonna clue the readers in, we hope, that this is something magical, something outside of ordinary reality. What I'm trying to capture in this is the kind of atmosphere of just unholy weirdness that you get in films like THE SHOUT or THE LAST WAVE by **Peter Weir**, both of which captured aborigine magic and expressed it in non-western, non-linear terms, which I think worked very well.

MATTHEW: *People also discuss magic in terms of Aleister Crowley. The way he would write about magic and express things was much more as a discipline. He saw it as a religion.*

STEVE: There are aspects, certainly, of Zen Buddhism or Hindu mysticism that function in the same way; even certain sects in Christianity have, you know, those magical experiences, speaking in tongues for example. Magic is something that has existed on this planet for a long time, it's just *how* it's interpreted in different ways now. **Crowley**'s approach is certainly going to be one aspect of how we're approaching magic in THE EMISSARY. It's going to be very much, you know, a mental discipline, a spiritual discipline — and if magic is worked there will be an energy cost in some way. Doing some sort of strong magic, say projecting oneself mentally across the continent, that requires a certain amount of energy which has to be

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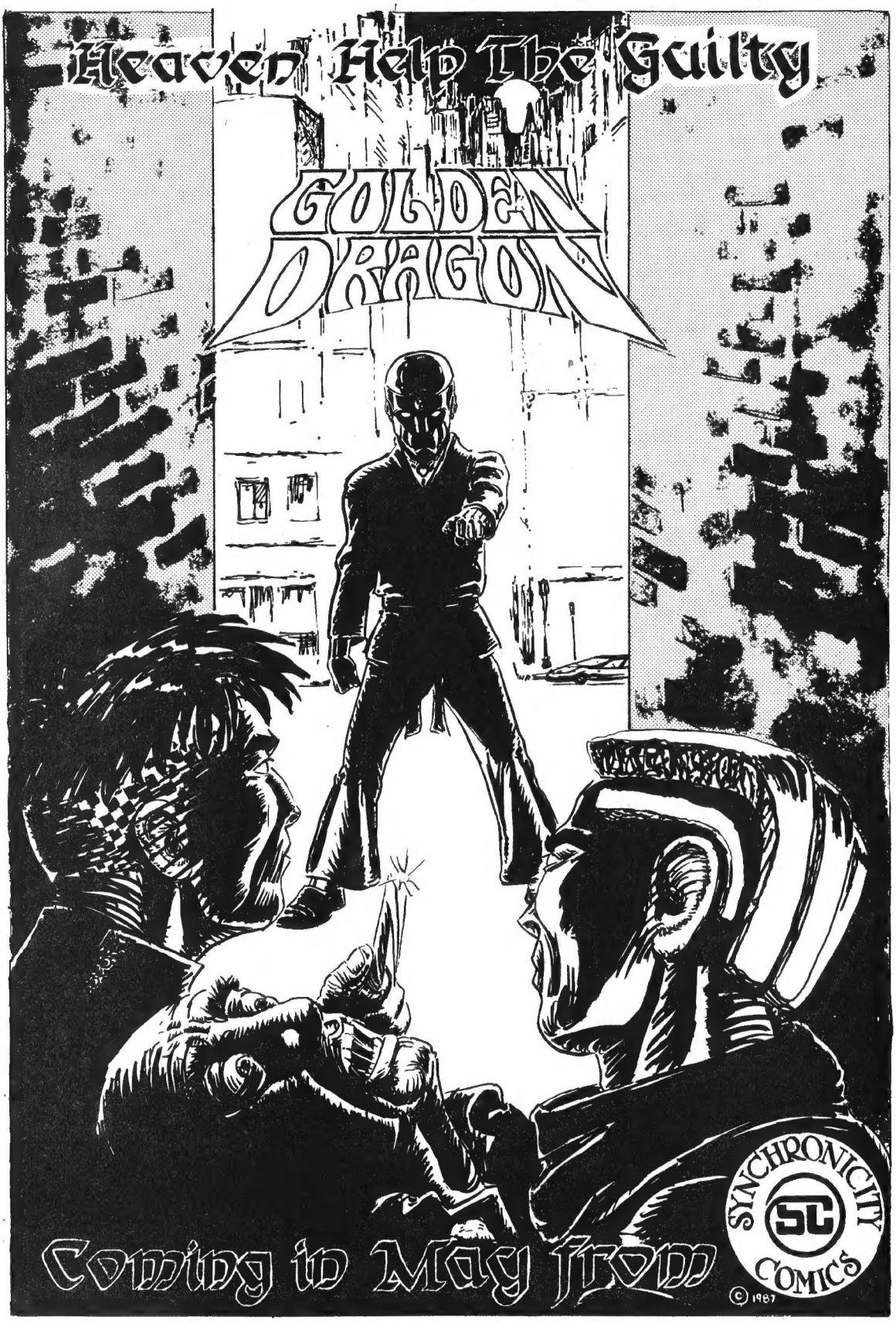
Heaven Help The Guilty
GOLDEN DRAGON
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"I'm not that interested in super-heroes."

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derived from something — whether it's a human sacrifice, and the energy is derived from the liberation of the soul energies of the sacrifice victim, or one uses up one's own internal resources.

The good guys in this — basically, Osric, our protagonist — would mostly draw on his own energies until he learns to tap into the collective human unconscious. That's a Jungian idea that we're integrating into the magic in this. I've derived a lot of my ideas on magic from the work of **Carl Jung. Jung** was very much a believer in the mass unconscious and the archetype — the archetype being a strong image in the mass unconscious that keeps recurring throughout generations. Something like circles...circles have a specific meaning — or the alchemical symbol, the snake swallowing its tail, has certain meanings in the occult and that has permeated various cultures.

MATTHEW: *How do you feel the archetypes as Jung described them come through in comics?*

STEVE: Basically on a very primitive, crude level. I think mostly comics present Jungian archetypes in terms of things like the hero myth — which certain heroes, such as Captain America and Superman, are perfect examples of — you know, the all-conquering force of right, light, reason, peace and justice. Most comics are done on a very simplistic level.

MATTHEW: *Getting back to what you've done, you've also worked limitedly for both DC and Marvel. Didn't you create a character while you were at DC?*

STEVE: Yes. I created the Feral Man for NEW TALENT SHOWCASE. It was in the fourth issue through the sixth issue, three segments. The Feral Man was my first and possibly only stab at creating a super-hero. What I wanted to do was create a character who was kind of like a scientifically justified Tarzan; a being that was super-strong and had incredibly magnified senses but for whom there was a logical reason for this, and I don't mean being bitten by a radioactive spider or struck by a bolt of lightning. This is somebody who went through tremendous physical agony, had like steel rods inserted into his bone marrow and had artificially derived polymers injected into his bone and muscle tissue to make them denser so that he'd be stronger, but the bio-engineering he underwent also made his personality unstable. He had mood shifts depending up which chemicals were released in his bloodstream. He was bio-engineered into a sort of super-wildman. I wanted to show that to become a superman is not without its costs.

THE FERAL MAN
HARRY BLACKBURN VOLUNTEERED FOR A CIA EXPERIMENT AND WOUND UP TRANSFORMED--A SUPER-HUMAN, WITH ANIMAL INSTINCTS--A FERAL MAN!
NOW HE'S RUNNING FROM THE COMPANY, TRYING TO EXPOSE THEIR CORRUPTION AND THE NEWS OF PROJECT F.M.
BUT HE BETTER MOVE FAST, FOR THE CIA HAS EYES EVERYWHERE...
DO YOU THINK MY HASSLE AT LOT 49 WILL BRING THE COPS THERE, RUBY?
YOU KIDDIN', HARRY? THE LOT'S BEEN OPEN FOR YEARS AND THE SNOOPERS STILL AREN'T HIP TO IT
IN FACT IT'S THERE THE WORK IS NOT A GOOD HIDE!
STEVE RINGGENBERG WRITER
CHRIS CARLSON PENCILLER
KARL KESEL INKER
DUNCAN ANDREWS LETTERER
HELEN VESIK COLORIST
KAREN BERGER EDITOR

"The Feral Man was my first and possibly only stab at creating a super-hero."

Anyway, that ran for three issues. I was sorry to see it end because I don't feel that I really got to put the character through his paces in a way that totally satisfied everything that I wanted to do for him. There were a lot of compromises along the way. Eventually, I would like to either revive that character for DC, if possible, or create another character that's similar but different enough that I could do it without infringing on DC's copyright. They own the Feral Man now, because I signed away the rights when I signed my checks.

MATTHEW: *Well, that's not legal anyway. The clause on the backs of paychecks that both Marvel and DC were using for years doesn't hold any legal water.*

STEVE: But I did have to sign the contract and in that I did explicitly sign away all rights, which is a shame. I feel like the Feral Man is a great name. I'd love to be able to use it. I wish I still owned it. It doesn't really look like I'll be able to do it again for DC. The impression I received was DC was looking for new talent but they didn't necessarily want to develop the characters that were developed in the NEW TALENT book.

MATTHEW: *DC seems to have had a major shift in what they've been printing in some of their experimental works since then.*

STEVE: That's true. DC is doing THE WATCHMEN, which in my opinion is the best comic coming from the mainstream market right now. DC does seem to be open to some new ideas, but in other ways they seem like the same old company.

MATTHEW: *Let's jump from DC over to Marvel.*

STEVE: Well, my tenure at Marvel was rather brief. *(Laughter.)* I have done a few things for MARVEL AGE magazine, a few articles and interviews here and there, and I wrote a back-up story in one issue of MOON KNIGHT, an eight-page story. But that was the only thing I ever wrote for Marvel, for various reasons. I don't think **Denny O'Neil** liked my story very much — and Denny was probably right, it was a pretty poor story. I don't know if I'll ever do any more work for Marvel at present because I'm not that interested in doing super-heroes and that seems to be the bulk of what they're doing.

MATTHEW: *You seem to not be real happy with a lot of your older work. You seem to be saying that it's all pretty poor.*

STEVE: I think I've gotten a lot better

THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS
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#17

The Southern Knights find themselves in a world of sword-and-sorcery.
A world filled with fear.
A world ruled by evil.

A world of tyranny—and yet a world with a prophecy:

"When dragons return, the evil shall be driven out."

Story - HENRY VOGEL
Art - PEPPERS & PROPST

#18

While Dragon searches desperately for the Last Retreat of his kind, Connie, Kristin and Electrode strive to prepare the people of this world to fight for their lives and freedom.

Alas, before the Knights are ready, the forces of evil make their move!

Aided by Aramis, practitioner of the Forbidden Arts of magic, the Knights must attack before the prophecy is fulfilled!

Story - HENRY VOGEL
Art - PEPPERS & PROPST

"We turn Bradbury & Bloch into comics."

since then. I know more than I did then. I look back at a lot of my work and, frankly, it's embarrassing. It's poor.

MATTHEW: *Well, do you think your interest in the characters might have had an effect?*

STEVE: Definitely. I find I do my best work when I'm working on my own characters and when I have a little bit more creative control. I can write things to order and have for various places — any professional has had that experience — but I find it more satisfying when I'm working on my own creations rather than working on characters I didn't create and might not have that much of an interest in. More and more I'm seeing a trend towards artists and writers creating their own characters and wanting to own them. I think that's an offshoot of the creator-owned comics that Marvel did, and certainly it's fallout from a company like Pacific which had a lot of creator-owned titles.

MATTHEW: *You're an associate editor for Byron Preiss Visual Productions. What are you doing for them?*

STEVE: Well, one of the projects we're doing is an anthology of comics — several anthologies actually — intended for the educational market. This is one place where I'm going to be able to put some of my theories about how comics work into practice. In this anthology, we're taking stories by major writers such as **Bradbury** and **Bloch** and turning them into comics. We're adapting 'em to about a 12 to 14-year-old reading level, and using some artists who are fairly well known in the business — and I'm gonna be using a lot of unknowns. What I'm going to do is try to successfully translate some of these stories from prose into comics. I'm not doing all of the adaptations myself. I'm

Synwulfe, from an upcoming series of the same name, by Steve, and George Pratt.

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OUTRIDER
MESSIAH...

the EMISSARY™

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in Full COLOR

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COMICS™

"I got heavily into Hemingway."

working with a variety of other writers. I'm going to use my own sensibilities and, of course, suggestions from my boss and the people at the Bank Street College of Education to shape how these stories come across, and it will be interesting to see how they go over. I hope people will like them, because I think that they are going to be a lot of fun to do and I find this project very satisfying.

MATTHEW: *When is it coming out?*

STEVE: Well, it'll be distributed to the educational market. You might find it in comics shops or B. Daltons and places like that, but I really don't know. My boss asked me not to say too much about it, but it's being done in conjunction with Bank Street Teachers College and they're coming out from a major publisher. There are going to be four anthologies of comics, about 224 pages in length, black-and-white, and we're going to be adapting some very good short stories by people like **Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, H.G. Wells, Andre Norton.** I think people will be satisfied with the selection. One is **Richard Connel's** famous story "The Most Dangerous Game." I'm really looking forward to that. I may have to exercise my editorial prerogatives and snag that one so I can adapt it myself. It's one of my absolute favorite short stories.

MATTHEW: *Getting more into your background, you went to the University of Arizona and studied writing there — has it affected you at all in your profession?*

STEVE: Well, in certain ways it steeled my determination to write fantasy and science fiction and to regard them as just as valid as any other literary form. The head of the department tried to convince me early on that genre fiction was not as worthwhile as doing mainstream novels — a contention that I strongly resented and to this day resent.

MATTHEW: *What do you think his reasoning was?*

STEVE: I think he considered writing genre fiction and writing things like comic books to be beneath a serious writer. I don't think that's true. I think somebody like **Harvey Pekar** has already proven that comics can be a valid and interesting and vital literary form. I think you can do things in comics that you can't do with any other artform, even though it is closely aligned with film. I've seen comics that also have some of the same qualities as a good short story or a well-written novel or even a radio show.

MATTHEW: *Did your schooling introduce you to different things that broke you out of some of the stylistic approaches that most comic-book writers take?*

STEVE: Sure. Around the time I was in college I got heavily into **Ernest Hemingway** and would go and scour the library for *anything* by **Hemingway.** I did the same thing with **Fitzgerald.** And around that same time I discovered other writers like **Anthony Burgess** — he's always had a big influence on me — and **Vance Bour-**

Cover study for THE EMISSARY.

"The comics medium tends to inhibit the

jaily, who is a fabulous novelist. He was one of my writing instructors for a semester. Vance really got me fired up to do the kind of writing I really wanted to do.

MATTHEW: *Did Vance have a problem with comics, too?*

STEVE: No. Vance was firmly behind my, you know, trying whatever I wanted to, as far as writing. I turned in a comic script as one of my assignments and I think I got an A on it. I remember him scribbling something — "This is amusing" — it was a FLASH GORDON parody starring you and me. **Bourjaily** himself, in his novel NOW PLAYING AT CANTERBURY, used comic captions and word balloons in certain chapters dealing with this one character, this Oriental musical director — and each chapter was told in a different literary voice. It was a modern equivalent of THE CANTERBURY TALES by **Chaucer**. **Bourjaily** took the story-within-a-story-within-a-story format and wove it into a really fascinating tapestry. It's one of my favorite books and it's definitely had a lot of influence on how I write. For a young writer that book is a *tour de force*; a textbook on different writing styles and approaches and techniques. And having **Bourjaily** for a teacher and reading his work, that showed me that really, if you can pull it off, almost anything goes in literature. Of course you have to take your chances. You can fall flat on your face if a particular device or style doesn't work — but, hey, failure is the price you pay for experimenting.

MATTHEW: *Who else has influenced you?*

STEVE: **Will Eisner**'s work has had an enormous influence, especially since he came out with his book on graphic narrative. I think **Eisner** is a model that all potential writers of comics should look at. **Eisner's** written some of the funniest, most poignant, most incisive comics that anybody has ever written, and is continuing to do just brilliant work. I like a lot of the stuff he's doing now even more than THE SPIRIT — even though I adore THE SPIRIT. I would say he and **Harvey Kurtzman** are the two comics writers that have influenced me the most. I also like **Archie Goodwin's** work an awful lot, particularly the work he did for Warren in the early '60s — I think it's some of Archie's best.

I find something like **Alan Moore's** THE WATCHMEN very interesting because **Moore** takes great delight in exploring those gray areas of human thought and behavior. For my money it's the best written comic on the market right now. I find it fascinating. It's stimulating in a way that most comics are not, and I hope that there will be more work of that caliber in the next few years.

MATTHEW: *How do you feel the way Moore handles his characters in THE WATCHMEN compares to the very popular way Frank Miller handled Batman in DARK KNIGHT?*

STEVE: I find it interesting to look at his work and, you know, speculate on why it's popular — and I think in a certain way **Miller**'s work is as emblematic of the '80s as **Jack Kirby**'s work was of the '60s when he was at his peak, working with **Stan Lee. Miller**'s kind of like the '80s' equivalent of **Jack Kirby,** with flashy graphics, really bold and simple and powerful. I think as a storyteller he's excellent — that's the most satisfying aspect of **Miller**'s work — but I don't think he can write nearly as well as someone like **Alan Moore,** who is an equally good storyteller but he also has a finer sense, I think, of the subtleties of handling dialogue and characterization. I look at **Miller**'s work and it seems like he's derived a lot of his style and a lot of his thoughts from popular culture, simply from movies and other comic books — which is cool but I think it leads to a more limited expression of the artform.

MATTHEW: *You would like to see people getting influences outside of just looking at whoever their favorite artist happens to be and learning to draw that way, or looking at Chris Claremont and learning to write from him — you'd rather see a broader approach to it?*

STEVE: Yes, absolutely. I think it's not enough to derive your worldview simply from fantasy and science fiction, comics and movies. You've gotta look at life, and I think it's a good idea to look at other authors.

MATTHEW: *Many of the writers that seem to take off the most are into fun. Do you feel it's a problem if maybe you begin to take yourself too seriously?*

STEVE: Yes. I see that in **Frank Miller's** work. His work really isn't fun. It's well done in a lot of ways, but it's not fun. His stories are depressing. I think his work

creativity of the writers and artists."

shows every indication that he takes himself seriously. **Chris Claremont** also gives every indication of taking himself too seriously, which is unfortunate. I think his work suffers a great deal from cliche and overwriting. I think that's a major problem with a lot of comics: the artwork is so inexpressive that the writer is forced, like **Claremont**, to write long, detailed captions explaining the character's inner state. That's one problem I have with a lot of mainstream comics, is that a monthly comic is simply done too fast for there to be a great deal of subtlety; and unless you're a **Jack Kirby** or a **Joe Kubert** you simply can't put out a product of any quality, a full comic book, in a month. There are exceptions, but for the most part mainstream comics are not very good. They're dull. For me that's the greatest crime for a comic. I'm with my buddy **Alan Weiss** who says his primary criteria is that a comic should be entertaining. The main reason I don't read most mainstream comics is because I don't find them entertaining. In terms of mainstream literature — besides **Vance Bourjaily** and **Hemingway** — I like **James M. Cain.** I like **Raymond Chandler** and **Dashiell Hammett.** Those are writers who had nice, terse, lean styles. That's what I tend to gravitate towards, the styles that are more sparse verbally, that pack more expressiveness, more emotion, more story into the fewest possible words.

I'm not a big fan of writers like **Henry James** who are unbearably wordy. I can't read his stuff. Another reason I don't like **James** is the stories he chooses to tell. I have no interest in the characters he's writing about. That's something else for writers to think about, is what story are you telling. Pick your story. Choose the characters you're talking about. My bottom line is I tell a story that I am interested in. I'm telling the kind of story that I would like to read, that I am interested in, and hope there are enough people out there who find the same kind of story entertaining that the book will go over well.

MATTHEW: *Let's get into style a little bit. We touched on your dislike of most of your work that's out there. Are you going to be doing things differently?*

STEVE: Well, of course, in THE EMISSARY — since you and I are collaborating on the scripts — that's a difference right there. It's going to be infused with your own sensibilities as well as mine. That's sort of a check on both of us — both of our excesses — 'cause we both have axes we want to grind and things we're interested in. But having to do it sort of by a consensus of two is going to, I

"Frank Miller's work really isn't fun.

think, make for a more balanced story than either of us would write individually. For THE EMISSARY, I'm going to mostly try to just tell the story in the dialogue. As a comics fan I don't like seeing comics where the artwork is cluttered up with a lot of wordy captions, and that goes for some of the ECs, too. As much as I love 'em, I think **Al Feldstein** overwrote in certain areas — whereas **Kurtzman's** work was a lot leaner and that's why I think **Kurtzman** was a better writer, even though I think **Feldstein** was one of the great comics writers of all time, too.

MATTHEW: *Well, Moore is quite verbose.*

STEVE: Yeah, well, the tack I'm taking on THE EMISSARY is going to be much less verbose than **Moore**, yet for the most part I enjoy **Moore's** verbosity. I don't think it's just simply talking to hear himself talk. **Moore** writes with a purpose.

MATTHEW: *Why can you accept Moore's verbosity more than Miller's?*

STEVE: Because I believe **Moore's** work more. It doesn't seem as pompous and self-satisfied as a lot of the work from **Miller** and **Claremont. Moore** , I think, tends to look at himself with more of an adult sensibility, more of a sense of irony, and I think that's reflected in his work.

MATTHEW: *Miller and Claremont seem to be coming up a lot. They're both immensely popular. It seems sort of an attack. Is there a bit of professional envy there?*

"Moore's work...doesn't seem as pompous and self-satisfied as a lot of the work from Miller and Claremont." Below: Claremont's words from X-Men #204. Compare to Miller's DARK KNIGHT (opposite.)

BULLY FOR THEM
YOU KNOW, AMANDA-- LATELY, I FIND MYSELF THINKING MORE AND MORE OF THE PAN-DIMENSIONAL ADVENTURE I HAD LAST YEAR.*
THAT WAS THE LIFE!
*IN THE NIGHTCRAWLER MINI-SERIES - Ann.
FANTASTIC WORLDS, DAMSELS IN DISTRESS, VILE VILLAINS--
--AND YOURS TRULY AS THE HERO WHO SAVED THE DAY!
INTO MY ARMS, MY PROUD BEAUTY!
AND I'LL SHOW YOU HOW I WON THE HEART.
OF THE JINJAV SABREE, OF BEL AMEE 'ANORA!
WHY CAN'T LIFE BE LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME?
NOT IN THE MOOD?
ACH-- NEITHER AM I, REALLY
THEN, AMANDA-- SO LONG AGO IT SEEMS LIKE ANCIENT HISTORY--
--BEING AN X-MAN WAS FUN!
BUT OUR HEARTS WERE LIGHT!
WE WERE MUTANTS-- OUTCASTS FROM HUMAN SOCIETY BECAUSE OF THE POWERS WE WERE BORN WITH--
NOW, EVERYTHING IS GRIM THE JOY-- THE ROMANCE-- THE INNOCENCE-- ALL GONE
WHY, KURT?
WHAT CHANGED?!
YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND!
HOW CAN I--
--IF YOU WON'T TALK TO ME!?!
NIGHTCRAWLER, I LOVE YOU! PLEASE-- I BEG YOU-- LET ME HELP!
THANKS TO THE BEYONDER, ALL THE THINGS THAT HAD MEANING FOR ME-- THAT GAVE MY EXISTENCE PURPOSE-- ARE TODT! DEAD! DESTROYED!
I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM ANYMORE, AMANDA--
--OR EVEN WHY I AM!
THERE, MY DARLING-- NOW YOU KNOW!
HELP ME WITH THAT!

MATTHEW: *Let's get into THE EMISSARY. THE EMISSARY will be both a comic and a novel. Why?*

STEVE: That was part of the concept almost from the word go. When I first thought up the idea for THE EMISSARY I was torn between wanting to do an illustrated novel, *a la* **Robert Howard's** THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER that

But that's only my opinion, you know, as a reader. I'm not putting myself up as any kind of great moral arbiter. Obviously, a lot of people out there like **Frank Miller's** work or he wouldn't be selling hundreds of thousands of copies of whatever he does. As I said, it's largely just a difference in philosophy.

MATTHEW: *Do you think maybe there's a problem with the comics medium as it's evolved?*

STEVE: Yes, I do, because I think it tends to inhibit the creativity of the writers and the artists. I think that the short story format is more conducive to a creative, experimental approach. I think a large measure of what's happened in mainstream comics is just simply motivated by commercial concerns. The work that **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** did in the '60s was enormously popular, and I think a lot of what's going on at Marvel Comics now is an attempt to recreate that kind of popularity, but frankly I'd rather see people doing something a little new and different.

MATTHEW: *As opposed to trying to recreate the past?*

STEVE: Yeah, exactly. All of this revisionist history...I think **Roy Thomas** has been guilty of that, the way he tries to go back and rewrite comics history, you know — redoing the Golden Age to his own specifications. I'm sure that must be tremendous fun for Roy, a real kick, but it doesn't necessarily make for original comics.

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His stories are depressing. . .serious."

Roy Krenkel illustrated, and doing a comic book. Both of us were then and are still now heavily into comics, and so we decided to do both because, eventually, we figured out that the demands of the two mediums were so different that we could do the same story and not get bored with it. There are different demands, different storytelling needs that had to be satisfied.

MATTHEW: *You talk about the different demands of the two mediums and that you can do different things — like what?*

STEVE: Well, I think comics is admirably suited to expressing action and the visual

qualities of the planet Calador where THE EMISSARY takes place, which we envision as a really rugged, beautiful planet, sort of like parts of Australia and our own American west. There's a heavy western and desert influence to the look of the story. I think it's easier to express that in a comic than in a novel, but I think the novel is going to be more suited to getting into the characters' heads, exploring the subtleties of magic, explaining the history of this society, and the minute details. In the comic, the emphasis is going to be, I think, to a larger degree on the action, on what the characters do rather than what they think; there will be enough difference in what you get out of each type of story that it will be worth your while. You'll be getting a different perspective on the same material. I think it will be a richer experience than simply reading the comic or the novel individually. If you read them both, you will get the entire picture.

MATTHEW: *What about THE EMISSARY is gonna make it stand out?*

STEVE: Well, I think one thing people are going to see immediately is the density of the detail of the storytelling. The art you're doing for it is extremely detailed. We want to make life on this planet as vivid as possible rather than just plopping these characters down in the middle of, you know, a phony-looking alien landscape and saying this is another planet but we still have the same sun and things are basically sort of like Earth. One thing both of us have tried very hard to do is instill a sense that this is an alien place, an alien culture, a different way of living. I think that vividness is certainly something that sets THE EMISSARY apart.

MATTHEW: *But seeing as we're from this planet then we're still going to have to base things on the experiences of this planet. How different can it be made?*

STEVE: Well, I think what it comes down to is just the quality of one's imagination and how good you can extrapolate. For everything in THE EMISSARY I've taken examples in my own research — as far as biology, sociology, religion, toxicology, meteorology, whatever — and I've extrapolated in as logical a fashion as I could the environment of Calador, the society of Calador, its people, its religions. I've tried to extrapolate from things that I know already exist and therefore are possible. We're trying to go for complete plausibility, believability, and that's where the density of detail comes in. I would like people to read this novel and feel like they've actually been to Calador, to know it in their bones what Calador is like. We're

doing our best to create that kind of vividness, to give it atmosphere, to make the characters live as real people.

MATTHEW: *We discussed Miller and Claremont who, let's face it, are two of the top writers in comics. What are you going to give the fans of Miller and Claremont in THE EMISSARY that they are going to like?*

STEVE: Good storytelling. Our storytelling is gonna be very cinematic, very pointed in the area of action — at least for the first couple of issues. I think action

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"The need for prostitution won't be

fans will definitely enjoy the first few issues of the series, will probably enjoy the whole run. I think we're also giving them good characters that are well drawn, that are interesting, and I think the relationships and the way the characters interact is going to be interesting especially to fans of **Claremont** — 'cause that's one of the things people seem to like about Chris' work, how he has the characters interacting. Also, THE EMISSARY does have a lot of characters, so there's going to be a very heavy ensemble feel.

MATTHEW: *Who is THE EMISSARY?*

STEVE: The emissary in the title refers to Osric, a human who was raised by the natives of the planet, the Aelifinri, who are called elves by the human population. The term elves is not a compliment. The humans use it in a denigrating fashion as certain racial slurs are used on this planet.

Osric to the Aelifinri is blessed. He was found by the Aelifinri aboard a ship after it was wrecked against the western-most coast of the continent. Osric's parents were the captain of the ship and his navigator. From his mother, who was an extremely strong psychic, Osric inherited an entire spectrum of psychic abilities, more so than any other human on the planet.

At this point I should throw in a little history of the planet. One thing that makes Osric unique is he is the only human being in Caladorian history to be raised by the Aelifinri. Human beings have been on Calador a little over 5,000 years, but for most of that time the human beings and the Aelifinri have been estranged. When the humans come to Calador the Aelifinri were simply nomadic barbarians. They didn't have a very high order of culture. They did have some psychic powers but they were rather slight. When the humans came to Calador it was in the form of the Rannate, a star empire. The Rannate found Calador, realized it was the last Earthlike planet in the known universe, and the people who ran the Rannate, the Tetrarchy — these four ancient, quasi-mythical beings — decided to have Calador turned into a combination of Las Vegas, Disneyworld and a big game park for their own amusement and the amusement of various other high-ranking nobles in the Rannate. Calador was terraformed into this fantasy wonderland, and part of the process was the conversion of all native animal life and a lot of the plant life into fantasy forms. They wanted something beautiful and bizarre and extreme, something to dazzle their senses; a playground for an extremely decadent, extremely ancient civilization — so there are dragons and satyrs and various other fantasy-analog animals.

The Aelifinri were used by the Rannate as slaves, and they didn't escape the genetic manipulation process, either. Cell tissue was taken from the Aelifinri and new individuals were cloned with the more desirable characteristics. The Aelifinri came out of the genetic conversion process taller, stronger, healthier — basically improved eugenically — but at the same time this unleashed the full potential of their psychic nature. Eventually, the Rannate was overthrown. They just became

something that people are ashamed of."

too large and too widespread for the central authority to maintain control. Because Calador was stuck in a kind of galactic backwater, it was forgotten about. It didn't help that the Tetrarchy had designated Calador top secret and very few people knew about it. It wasn't in any central computer banks. So it was abandoned. The humans living now on Calador are the descendants of the Rannate citizens who were left on the surface of the planet.

MATTHEW: *What about all the knowledge they had?*

STEVE: A lot of the knowledge was lost. The story of THE EMISSARY takes place 5,000 years later. Almost all of the high-tech artifacts have either worn out or they've been destroyed. Most of the 50,000 or so humans that were stranded on the surface of Calador were, like, wine stewards and clerks. They didn't have the great technical knowledge. They were definitely on the lower end of the Rannate spectrum, mostly of the service class, working blue-collar types. These people weren't engineers. They weren't genetic scientists. A lot of that information that was locked in the computer banks was lost to them. After a generation or two out in the wilderness their descendants didn't know *how* to operate computers. They couldn't access the computers that remained even though a lot of them were in working condition, and are so at the time of Osric.

When you first see the human culture, really see it in any kind of detail, you're going to experience it in the City of Lights, the largest city on Calador. It was the largest Rannate center, a starport and research center on the western-most continent on Calador — a continent about the size of Australia that's isolated from the other three major continents which are all in the southern hemisphere. The human culture as of 5,000 years after the collapse of the Rannate is going to be very similar to that of Renaissance Italy, at least in the city.

MATTHEW: *City-states?*

STEVE: Yeah. Each settlement is going to be a city-state governed by a local strongman. It's not going to be a very democratic arrangement, but it's not going to be entirely oppressive. It's certainly going to be capitalistic in certain ways. There are going to be trade guilds and other organizations representing various groups within society, like the prostitutes have their own union. On Calador prostitution is not illegal. It's a long-standing and well known profession well respected in most quarters because on Calador they're less hypocritical than, say, the United States. The need for prostitution, for commercialized sex, will be part of the culture, will be understood. It won't be something that people are ashamed of. The kind of culture we're shooting to create is sort of a very robust frontier culture. It's kind of cut-throat in certain ways, but it's also the kind of place where a man with a good idea or a strong back can make his living if he's willing to work hard and forge his own empire. One thing that is kind of an aspect of the rough-hewn society is that anybody can become an archon. People are going to be allowed to work their way up if they're willing to work hard or if they have a good idea.

Archon Ravan is going to be the patron of Osric at the beginning of the story — one example of the self-made man. Ravan is not very cultured, did not come from a wealthy or very powerful family, but he worked his way up and now he's the most powerful archon on the continent. His chief rival inherited his position and that's going to be a difference between them. That's going to be a source of tension. Archon Ravan's chief rival in the story is Archon Rede, and they are going to be going back and forth trying to assassinate each other and generally take over each other's holdings throughout the series. The struggle between them is going to be sort of a parallel to the main struggle which is the primary thrust of the book, the struggle between Osric and Cestus, who is the Aelifinri villain of the piece, an 800-year-old wizard whose goal is to take over the entire continent and kill Osric.

MATTHEW: *A wizard?*

STEVE: Well, not really a wizard. That's the wrong phrase to use. Cestus is a sorcerer. He was driven out from the Aelifinri population hundreds of years ago when it was discovered that he was doing black magic and killing other Aelifinri to power his experiments. Cestus is what is known in the Aelifinri culture as a *dhal-tze*. A *dhal-tze* is the hereditary scapegoat of the Aelifinri. The *dhal-tze* is an offshoot of the genetic manipulation the Aelifinri underwent at the hands of the humans. They feel that every couple of hundred years — which is about an Aelifinri generation since they usually live about 200 years — every couple of hundred years they have a *dhal-tze*; someone who is taken to be the embodiment of evil, of all the bad aspects of their race, and that person becomes the embodiment of their worst fears, usually.

MATTHEW: *How is this an offshoot of their genetics?*

STEVE: Well, the Aelifinri regard it as such. They feel like the genetics ex-

"Calador turned into a playground for an

periments were sort of like a cleansing, a winnowing process that they went through, and they emerged from it with a real horror and disdain for their own barbarous past. They're more intellectually and spiritually inclined at this point. They try to, like, embody the ideals that they hold, the ideals of justice and, you know, equality and no racism — even though in practice they do harbor certain racist tendencies against the humans because there's an ancient hatred that goes back thousands of years between the two races. But the *dhal-tze* is their way of putting all of the sins of an entire generation on one person.

In the story it's going to be slightly ambiguous as to whether the *dhal-tze* is actually the embodiment of their fears or the creation of their fears. The *dhal-tze* are invariably raised to be constructive, normal individuals in their society, but because the Aelifinri are so highly developed there is a lot of psychic backlash that each *dhal-tze* picks up. Outwardly they're treated normally, but the Aelifinri do regard the *dhal-tze* as different.

MATTHEW: *So, because of their belief, however they decide that this one who's just been born is the dhal-tze, do they make that self-fulfilled prophesy?*

STEVE: Basically. The Aelifinri get what they deserve from the *dhal-tze*. They're not perfect. That's one way in which we're trying to make THE EMISSARY different than a lot of comics. We're trying to stay away from everything being black and white and very simple to explain. There are going to be morally gray areas. The good guys are not going to be perfect. The Aelifinri, however admirable and vigorous their culture is going to be, are not going to be shown as some kind of perfect, rational supermen like the Vulcans. They're going to be fallible beings.

MATTHEW: *This is quite a volume of information. What if a reader misses an issue?*

STEVE: Well, we're trying to design every story — except for the case where we go for a two-parter, like in the first two issues — we're trying to design each issue to be a self-contained unit, so you can read the story and you don't need to have read a previous issue to understand what's going on. You might have a better appreciation of the characters if you know a little bit more about them, but that won't be absolutely necessary. It's going to be a series of connected, complete...anecdotes. We're going for a more picaresque feel. A lot of the story is going to be told in incidental fashion. Things will happen and they may not seem significant but, you

extremely decadent ancient civilization."

know, ten issues down the road you'll understand the significance of what happened.

MATTHEW: *So basically you want the reader to pay attention?*

STEVE: Well, I think THE EMISSARY probably will be making greater demands on the attention and intelligence of the readers than a lot of comics do, but we're going for a slightly older audience. I think that a twelve-year-old would be perfectly capable of reading THE EMISSARY and enjoying it, you know, for the action and vividness and the good art, but we're aiming at an older group, including college-educated science-fiction fans. We also want a book that will appeal to women as much as to men.

MATTHEW: *How is the battle between the sexes going to be handled?*

STEVE: We are going to show the battle between the sexes in a way that I hope will be interesting and unique. On Calador we've got a more egalitarian society because of the necessities of survival. In this story we have outriders, the private armies of the individual archons. They're sort of a combination of bodyguards, scouts, caravan guards, private police force, private labor battalion. A lot of the outriders are women. Almost half of every company of outriders is going to be women. The women of Calador are a very hardy breed. *(Laughter.)*

MATTHEW: *What do you mean "hardy breed"?*

STEVE: Well, we're not going to have any women in the story who are the typical shrinking violet heroines who hang around to be rescued. We're trying to excise any kind of, like, gratuitous T&A from this strip. We're trying to eliminate the blatant sexism. You're not going to see women running around in stainless steel brassieres. We're trying to have as many interesting and well-drawn female characters as male characters.

MATTHEW: *What's the central conflict of the story?*

STEVE: Well, basically, THE EMISSARY is the story of a war, and the central conflict there is between the two personalities of our protagonist and our villain. They come into conflict not for any kind of the usual reasons for a war. I mean, nobody's trying to seize territory. Cestus, our villain, goes to war with the human race and the Aelifinri because he's had a prophetic dream in which he sees his own death and he knows that Osric is destined to be the instrument of his death. It's largely a symbolic dream and the symbolism is not going to be explicit in the first issue, but it's going to gradually become more explicit during the course of the series. As we give the readers more details they'll be able to figure out what the various symbols in his dream mean. The readers are going to see the entire dream in the first issue.

MATTHEW: *So everybody's going to have to interpret it kind of on their own?*

STEVE: Right. It's going to require a little brainwork. We're not handing the readers everything on a silver platter. That may alienate some of our readership but we hope that the large majority of people will find it a fascinating challenge to figure out what's going on, and there will be enough things that are explicable and understandable that we trust they'll just be carried along by the momentum of the story and by fascination with the personalities and the events that occur.

MATTHEW: *You're not trying to alienate anybody?*

STEVE: No, but we're trying to do something that's a little bit more complicated than the latest issue of THE X-MEN, say, or THE TEEN TITANS.

Cover of THE EMISSARY #1.

"I've turned down offers upwards of a hun-

FRANK FRAZETTA

So much has already been written about Frank Frazetta and his work that it's difficult to know where to begin. His popularity is such that he's not only been endlessly discussed in fanzines for the past two decades, but has also been profiled in ESQUIRE and AMERICAN ARTIST (the issue featuring Frazetta was the only sold-out issue in the

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Frank Frazetta
Born: 9 February 1928 — Brooklyn, NY
Residence: Eastern Pennsylvania
Occupation: Artist
Training: Eight years at the Brooklyn Academy of Fine Arts studying under Michael Falanga.
Credits: Frazetta's first published work in comics was assisting John Guinta at the age of sixteen on "Snowman," a character he created. It appeared in TALLY-HO #1 in 1944. Over the next few years he did much funny-animal work, drawing text-heads and interior stories for such titles as COO-COO, BARNYARD and SUPER MOUSE from 1947-49. Frazetta did the "White Indian" strip as a back-up in DURANGO KID #'s 1-16 (from '49-'52). Other notable comics work includes, "The Shining Knight," which appeared in ADVENTURE COMICS; THUN'DA, which was published in 1952 and is notable as the only comic book entirely drawn by Frazetta; many stories done in collaboration with Al Williamson and Roy G. Krenkel for EC's science-fiction titles, and "Squeeze Play," the only solo story Frazetta did for EC; a series of Buck Rogers covers done for FAMOUS FUNNIES #'s 209-217, which are among the most famous and widely-reproduced pieces of comic art of all time. He drew the syndicated strip JOHNNY COMET from 1952-1953, then moved on to ghosting the LI'L ABNER Sunday page for Al Capp for a number of years. In the early '60s, Frazetta did black-and-white interior illustrations for various men's magazines, assisted Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder on "Little Annie Fanny" for PLAYBOY; then, with the help of his friend Roy G. Krenkel, began doing paperback covers for Ace's Edgar Rice Burroughs series and other fantasy and science-fiction titles. His last work in comics was the story "Werewolf," which appeared in CREEPY #1, and a one page "Creepy Loathsome Lore" which appeared in CREEPY #2. Frazetta also did a fondly remembered series of covers for the early issues of EERIE, VAMPIRELLA, and BLAZING COMBAT for Warren. From the mid-'60s onward, Frank concentrated on painting, including his justly famous CONAN series for Lancer. Frazetta won the Hugo Award as Best Artist in 1966. During this same period he also painted a great many movie posters for such films as WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT, AFTER THE FOX, THE NIGHT THEY RAIDED MINSKY'S, HOTEL PARADISO and others, establishing himself as one of the most adept caricaturists in the commercial art field. In the '70s, Frazetta did a second series of ERB covers for Ace, one of which garnered him an Award of Excellence from the New York Society of Illustrators. He also did several limited-edition portfolios in the '70s: KUBLA KHAN, WOMEN OF THE AGES, and THE LORD OF THE RINGS. Bantam books also began publishing THE FANTASTIC ART OF FRANK FRAZETTA, a series which has run to five volumes and sold well over a million copies. In 1983, Frank designed and co-produced (with Ralph Bakshi) the animated film FIRE AND ICE, which was an attempt to bring Frazetta's style to life on the screen. In 1985, after several years of planning and preparation by Ellie Frazetta, the FRAZETTA MUSEUM opened its doors, offering a permanent showcase for the many oil paintings still in the Frazettas' possession. As of this writing, Frank has embarked on a new series of paintings, featuring his DEATH DEALER characters, which have yet to see print.

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dred grand for any one of these paintings."

magazine's history). Frazetta is an American phenomenon. No other American painter commands such fanatical loyalty from his fans or has an audience that cuts so broadly across all cultural divisions. Frazetta's admirers range from bankers to bikers, movie moguls to Marines.

A quick aside: during a brief stint working on a biker magazine, I saw innumerable photos of Frazetta's art airbrushed on the sides of vans, or emblazoned on Harley gas tanks, even tattooed on people's backs. And not small tattoos, either — I'm talking about every square inch of skin from collar to beltline. Think about that. You'd have to like.a piece of artwork a hell of a lot to have it etched into your flesh. You certainly don't see bikers having Robert Rauschenberg or Keith Haring paintings tattooed on their girlfriends' backs.

As a further mark of his extraordinary popularity, Frazetta had the signal honor of being given a citation from the Army because his CONAN THE DESTROYER painting was selected for one unit's shoulder patch. And this is the same painter who was given an Award of Excellence by the New York Society of Illustrators, whose work is taught in college painting classes.

So I know I'm not alone when I say, quite simply: Frank Frazetta is my favorite artist. Period. And has been since I was twelve years old. No other artist has had such a revolutionary impact on my consciousness, my perceptions of life, and my fantasies. As I've gotten older, I've grown to prize the work of other painters: Monet, Van Gogh, Rodchenko, Klimt, but none of them could match the sudden, visceral impact Frazetta had on me. And I know that his work must have had a similar impact on thousands — perhaps millions — of other people.

The power, the vitality, the raw sensuality of Frazetta's work speaks to the

PHOTO: Steve Bryant

"It was a learning process — I didn't

mass consciousness in ways the art establishment can't (or won't) fathom. Suffice it say that Frank Frazetta's work will be around for a long, long time, as will the work of any artist of lasting worth.

And Frank's wife, Ellie, has ensured that his work will survive and be appreciated in the proper surroundings. It was she who curtailed Frank's open-handed generosity with his originals; it was Ellie who meticulously planned and executed the Frazetta Museum, which opened in 1985 — an event which publisher Ian Ballantine rightly observed was "unprecedented." It's hard to think of another artist who's opened a museum of his own works during his own lifetime, and Frazetta is still *producing. Indeed, he's attacking his work with a vigor and enthusiasm one rarely sees in artists half his age.*

Examples of Frank's enormous versatility. The Roman drawing appeared in the NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, and the facing illustrations were done between 1962 and 1964 for various men's magazines.

If it's unprecedented for Frazetta to open his own museum, it's still perfectly in keeping with the man's character. So much of his career has been unprecedented. He's been a uniquely creative force in the fields of comic art, cartooning, illustration and painting. He's one of the most widely imitated artists of the late Twentieth Century with a powerful style that's instantly recognizable.

As a teenager growing up in Arizona, I often fantasized about meeting Frazetta, and wondered what he was like. When I finally did meet Frank, it was at artist Roy G. Krenkel's funeral — not the happiest of circumstances, certainly, but I was able to renew my acquaintance with him when I journeyed to Pennsylvania to interview Frazetta for an article on the opening of his museum.

And what is *he like, this singular, dynamic artist?*

It's a pleasure to report that Frank Frazetta is a great guy: warm, funny, generous and open, a model host who instantly puts his guests at their ease. Totally confident, yet unimpressed by his own fame, he remains a regular guy, a total professional, an avid golfer and camera nut, but most of all, a dedicated husband and father. In person, he is absolutely one of the most magnetic men I have ever met. Not knowing him, if I spotted him across a roomful of people, I would instantly gravitate to him as the most interesting person in the room.

But perhaps the most telling summation of Frazetta comes from Frank, himself. As we sat in his studio talking, after concluding the interview, he gestured at his easel, upon which rested a magnificent, almost finished oil painting of a naked woman on horseback galloping down a gorgeous, sun-washed expanse of beach. "That's not Frazetta," he remarked, waving a huge hand at the painting. Turning, he gestured to the glass-fronted cabinet containing his cameras and handgun collection. "This is Frazetta," he said with a smile.

For the art illustrating this interview I concentrated on Frazetta's black-and-white illustrations and his comics work because, after all, this magazine is called COMICS INTERVIEW.

If you want to look at Frazetta's paintings, pick up any of the five volumes of THE FANTASTIC ART OF FRANK

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realize how voluminous my women are."

FRAZETTA or, better still, make the trip to East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, and visit the museum. Any black-and-white reproduction, no matter how good, cannot do justice to his work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I'd like to thank Frank and Ellie Frazetta for their kindness and cooperation in allowing me to publish this interview. Many thanks also to Ian Ballantine for supplying the transparency for our cover, to Steve Bryant for the superb photos accompanying the interview, and to Marc Thorner, Russ Steffens and Byron Preiss for their assistance.

STEVE RINGGENBERG: *When did you start working on the museum?*
FRANK FRAZETTA: Right after I came back from California, so that would be, maybe, oh, early '83, I suppose. We bought the building, and it even may have been an afterthought, quite frankly.
STEVE: *You bought the building first and then...*
FRANK: Yeah, I think that's the way it worked, and I think we bought the building because it was here and we needed storage for our poster business; we were running out of room back home for that kind of thing, and T-shirts, and the rest of that commercial stuff. And then it grew. We said, "My gosh, we've got a storefront. My boys can go into business for themselves," the museum idea. It was basically all Ellie's idea. I'm not business oriented.
STEVE: *You said that opening the museum was kind of an after-thought. What made you open it at all?*
FRANK: I think it was due to the popularity of the work. You know, the fans were constantly asking if they could come to see the originals and so on and so forth and the best we did through the years was have some exhibits at different conventions and that was kind of inconvenient, to haul the paintings around and worry about security. And we're simply doing it for all the people that have had fun with my work. No other reason. It's not for profit, because...you know, the money's here. I could've sold the paintings and gotten rich probably, but they're here for the world. You can't take them with you, you know. And I think my joy is in showing the work.
STEVE: *So that's basically the primary purpose of the museum?*
FRANK: Absolutely. No other reason that I can imagine.
STEVE: *Will there ever be any other artists displayed here?*

FRANK: We have considered it, but that would be in the adjoining room, the gallery room. And we have been considering that, and we've been talking to other artists and they're interested, but we'll have to wait and see, because we suddenly found that I have an awful lot of drawings, like little doodles and watercolors and so on, that simply don't fit in in this room, and we may have to utilize our addition for that purpose. As long as people want to see them.
STEVE: *Would you ever like to display some of Roy Krenkel's paintings?*
FRANK: I don't have any of Roy's paintings.
STEVE: *I thought maybe if you could assemble a show or something. His stuff is probably pretty scattered by now.*
FRANK: Well, since he died, I know that his work is being handled by the estate — you know, **Al Williamson** and some of those people — and I don't know anything about it or what they're doing with it.
STEVE: *When you were working for Ace back in the early '60s, did Don Wollheim keep a lot of your paintings or did you get your stuff back?*

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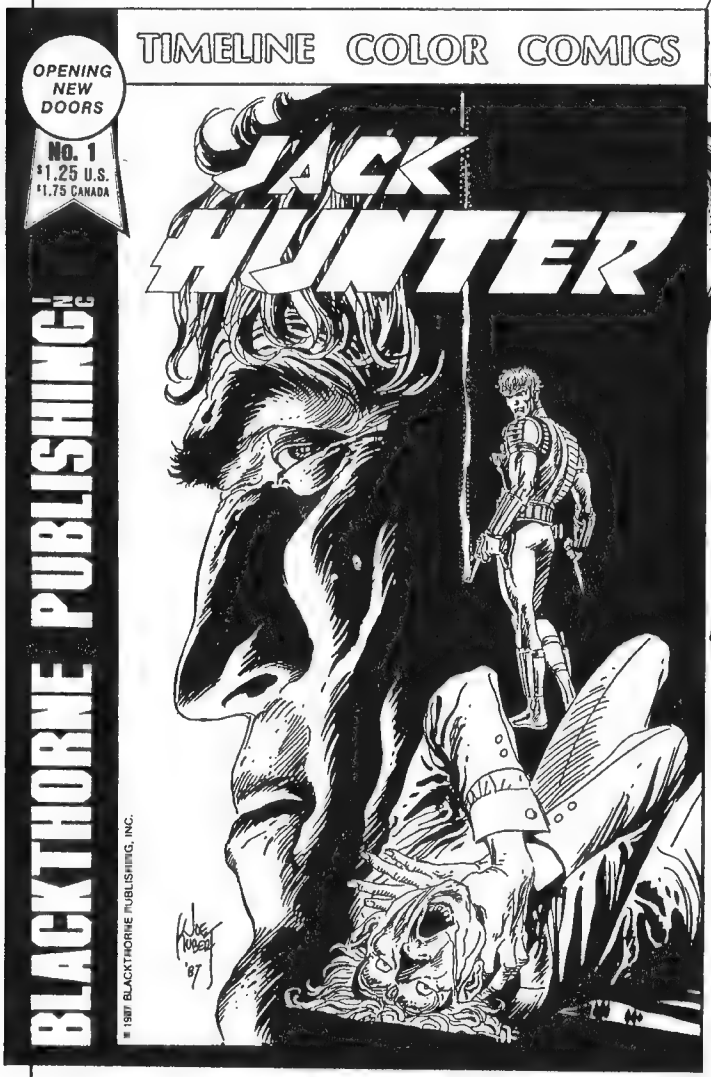

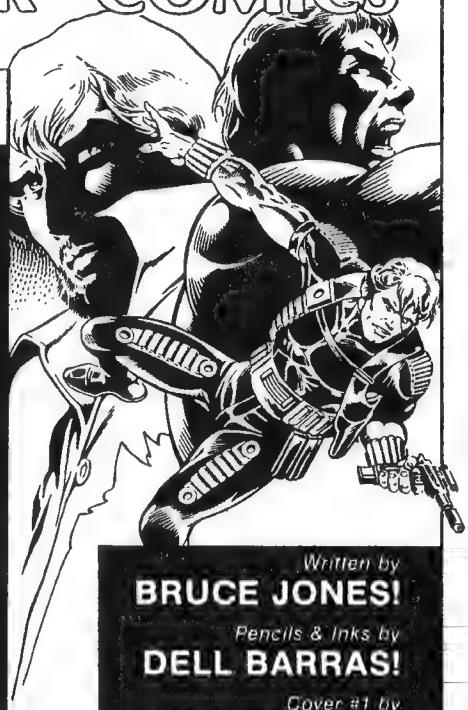

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"They kept the original art. . . ."

FRANK: Ace kept them. I wouldn't say Don kept them. But, Ace, that was the way they operated. They kept the original art, and that was pretty standard, I think, for most publishers at that point, one of the reasons being that most artists didn't care. I mean they painted it, and got paid and forgot about it. They really didn't take much interest in their original art, and they kind of thought I was strange wanting to retain the original. And that is primarily the reason I think some of that art is inferior; because I saw no reason to work much harder than was necessary. The price wasn't especially wonderful, and I knew that the art was just gone forever. So, I just approached the question very casually. And too many people, fans included, consider that part of my growth. They look at it and they see what they consider an improvement, and it's really not so, because the work I did later, like for Lancer, is really no better than I was capable of in the '60s, not to mention the '50s. I have to feel that the effort is worth something. If the art is awfully good, I simply can't see it just being shipped around and lost and put into some stockroom or something. And I was obviously right, since the world is awfully happy that I do have, certainly, most of the art.

STEVE: *How many originals of yours do you still have, Frank, as far as paintings?*

FRANK: I don't know. I really haven't counted. I've got. . . This is only a fraction. *(Gestures to the 60 or so paintings on the museum walls.)*

STEVE: *Have you ever had your originals catalogued? You know, gone though everything to know exactly what you've got?*

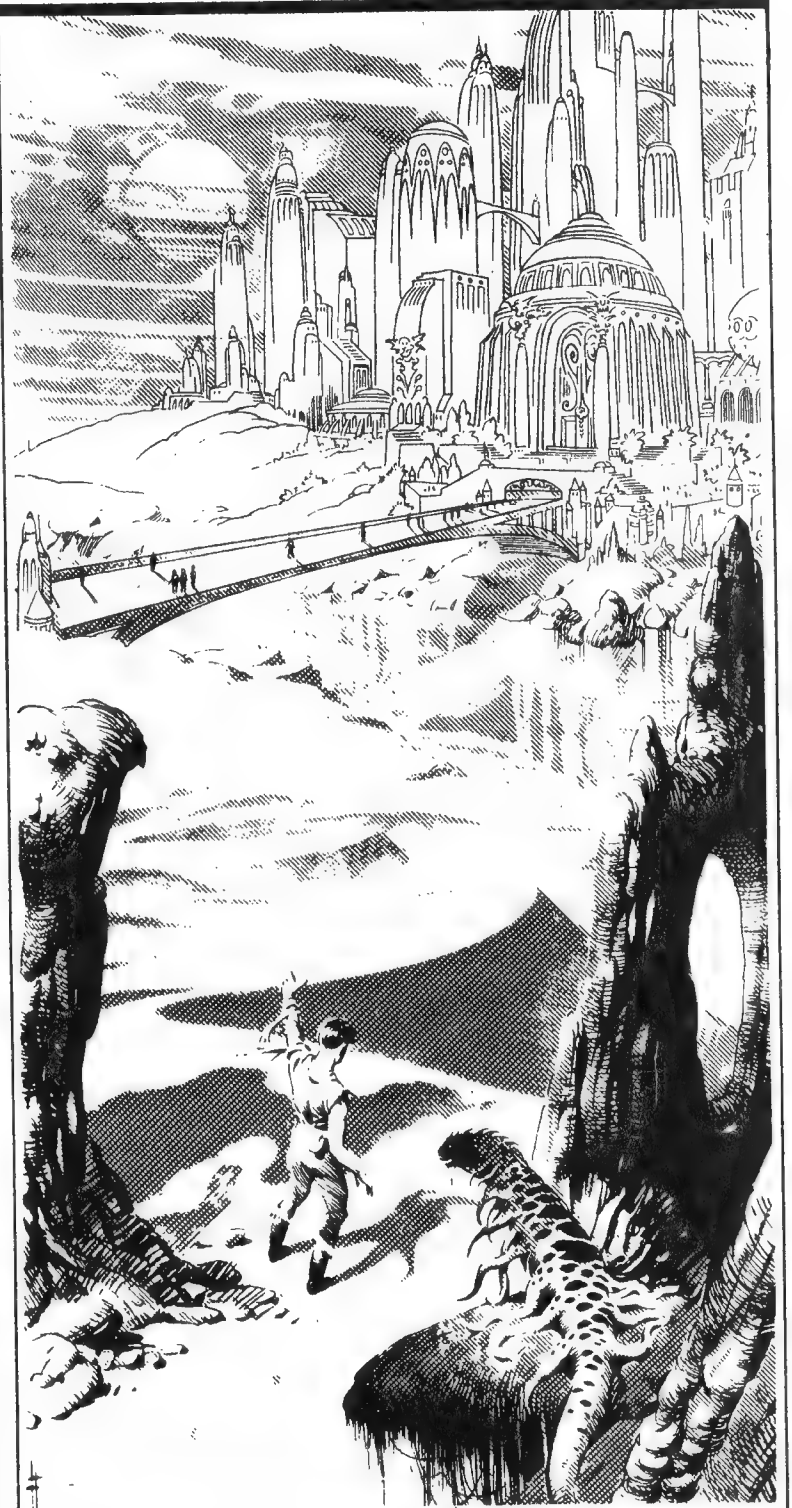
FRANK: No. Not really. The posters were catalogued at some point. I've got closets and big cabinets filled with them, that sort of thing, pen and inks or. . .

STEVE: *Do you just have little doodles that you do and go, "Oh that's nice," then put away?*

FRANK: Yeah. I'll tell you. I used to give them away. Ellie no longer. . .

STEVE: *Ellie put a stop to that, did she?*

FRANK: Ellie put a very, very solid stop to it. You know what brought that on? When I first started painting, "Oh, you like it? Keep it." But it was a little irritating to find that they suddenly turned around and sold it when they were offered money. And the next person in turn sold it for maybe double, then triple, and I just watched this market create itself out there and I began to feel like a fool. You know, I have to eat, too, and pay the rent, and here I'd given something away and here



A vintage collaboration of Al Williamson and Frank, this ethereal panel from "Mad Journey," published in EC's WEIRD FANTASY #14 (July, 1953), clearly illustrates the influence Roy Krenkel had on Frank's style. The dreamlike city in the background is a Krenkel hallmark.

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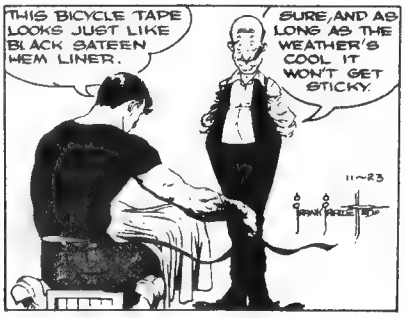
"I used to give my paintings away

Below: Panels from JOHNNY COMET, the syndicated strip Frank drew between 1952 and 1953. Opposite: One of the many Buck Rogers covers Frank contributed to EC's FAMOUS FUNNIES in the early '50s.



it was wandering around the country and going for, like, five thousand bucks. That was five thousand I certainly could've used, happily. So, at that point, we kind of wised up.

STEVE: *Well, during the period when you were doing comics, when you got a job back, didn't you used to just give the pages away sometimes?*

FRANK: Oh, sure. The only time I ever really kept something or insisted on keeping or retaining the original, I just happened to think it was pretty special and I thought it was too good to part with.

STEVE: *Well, you still have the originals to the Buck Rogers covers that you did, don't you?*

FRANK: Yeah, because I knew that they were good, and I knew that they had a lasting quality and I don't know that I thought that they might be worth lots of money or anything like that, I just knew I had something really good. I was giving away some good work, but not an awful lot, and I'm delighted that I didn't. I feel it was in the cards, the reason being this museum. Because not only had I given everything away or sold everything, that was it, the money would've been spent, the paintings would be anywhere, everywhere. And I delight in really doing a piece of work and watching people's reaction, and that's the joy, I think, of any artist, any performer, right? You perform, the applause — *Wow!* They live for the applause. I'm not looking for applause, but I like some feedback; I used to get it through the mail, but what's better than in person, having conversation and discussing it, and I also learn that way. I pick up a feel about people and what their reaction is, positively, negatively, and I think that's part of the learning process. Most of what I do is very pleasureable to me and very personal, but I'm unusual in that I do feel for people and I do paint for people. I think I always have.

STEVE: *Do you have an ideal audience in your head?*

FRANK: No, but I had specific people; I don't have to mention names, but there are specific people in the course of my life that I was close to, and literally painted for them. **Krenkel** was one, and there were others before him, and others after him certainly: school teachers, art teachers, this kind of thing, and I was like a little child pleasing your father and all. "Look what I've done." And this is what turned me on. Of course, the audience kind of grew.

STEVE: *You have sold some of your paintings. Through the '70s I know you were dealing with Russ Cochran, the art dealer. What's your criteria for whether you keep a painting or not?*

FRANK: I look at it and think, well, I can live without that one. Of course, I may need a few bucks suddenly. And if I see a few paintings that are just sort of taking up space, I'm not particularly happy about them, I don't think they're successful from where I'm coming from. They're okay, possibly good enough so that someone might enjoy them for, of course, a far smaller price, and they're better off in someone's hands. There are others I simply won't part with. They're just too valuable. I've turned down offers of upwards of a hundred grand for any one of these *(points to the walls)* and if you're talking about the CONANs, forget about it. It's out of sight.

STEVE: *What do you think is the most popular painting that you've done? If you had to pick just one.*

FRANK: I don't think it's been seen yet. THE CAT GIRL may very well be, the CONANs, of course, are extremely popular. I think DEATH DEALER seems to be the most popular one, but I couldn't be sure.

STEVE: *When the CONAN films came out, did they approach you to do the poster?*

FRANK: Oh, yes. In fact, they did use the original CONAN in Europe. Not here.

STEVE: *It hasn't been seen here?*

FRANK: No. That's right. They felt,

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. . . and I began to feel like a fool."

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"Ralph Bakshi offered me co-producership."

well, the Europeans, it'll be like a new thing for them, so they used that. I understand they had the billboard, like, fifty feet high, with the original, THE AVENGER. And they approached me to get involved in the film, too, in some capacity.

STEVE: *What did they want you to do, designs or something?*

FRANK: Oh, probably. Inspire them or try to get some of the quality that was in the paintings. I discussed it once or twice, but I wasn't really expecting anything.

STEVE: *How did you get involved with FIRE AND ICE?*

FRANK: Well, **Ralph Bakshi** offered me co-producership. That's quite a difference there. It's not like being an adviser or hanging around and growing grass under your feet. With him I was co-producing, which meant I got to certainly play a big part in making a film.

STEVE: *Didn't you also work as a second unit director, directing the rotoscope sequences?*

FRANK: Oh, yeah. I got involved in all the action, certainly, and some of it that wasn't action. I was also working with all the artists. This is quite a difficult task, and it's not just producers working with live actors, and then you work with editing. Now you're suddenly . . . editing, but you're also drawing. You've got probably seven hundred thousand frames. That's a lot of pictures! And I'm working with forty or fifty different artists, and so they can't all be on the very same level in terms of talent and so I had to work pretty hard with them, after the shooting was done, in getting a certain look, a certain quality, and it wasn't unsuccessful in its part. Some of the weaker parts of the film are in the storyline, which I was never too thrilled about. The art was inconsistent at best, but it had some moments and I don't know how you feel about the action, but I was happy with the action because I directed it.

STEVE: *Isn't it true that at a couple of points you had to come in and draw the wolves and the giant lizard, because the artists they had couldn't do it?*

FRANK: Oh, yeah. They couldn't do it. I did quite a few drawings. At that time I'd done a tracing paper set-up and

One of Frank's illustrations for the credit sequence of the feature animation FIRE AND ICE, which he co-produced in the '70s with Ralph Bakshi. Bakshi is also known for having animated FRITZ THE CAT and LORD OF THE RINGS.

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"You'd have to exaggerate like mad."

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overlays and so on, and I literally did a whole series of drawings of the wolf, you know, the mouth opening and snarling and that sort of thing, which involves, God, a number of individual drawings and movements.

STEVE: *Would you do the key illustrations and somebody else would do the in-betweens?*

FRANK: It was a girl, **Debbie Tucker**, who did the keys, and I would check out all her keys and go over them and go over them. At first it was difficult, but she got better as we went along, and better and better and better and better, and there was less work required at my end, because she was really picking up pretty well.

STEVE: *Did Bakshi have a pretty good crew assembled?*

FRANK: Well, it was, you know . . . what can you say? You're not going to find the top-notch illustrators getting involved in that kind of thing. You're going to get people who draw reasonably well, who don't mind sitting in there in that little cubbyhole painting cels. It's very boring, very trying work. . . . I mean drawing rubbery little creatures is one thing. Bakshi's crew did beautiful work on that, I mean totally animate a little character, but we're shooting for "realism," you know, in quotes, and that's difficult. You know, you can't render in light and shadow, it's got to be done with a line. Yes, you rotoscope, but my God, you'd be shocked if you saw how we buried that. We just could not actually trace a figure. It had to look like a **Frazetta** figure. No matter how wonderful they looked in person, there was something about the lack of dimension. You know, when you'd suddenly draw the outline of one of the hero actors it'd fell flat, so you'd have to exaggerate like mad at least another fifty percent at times. Crazy! I could not believe it, and the girl who was a perfectly delightful young girl with a wonderful figure, fell flat, again. In fact, it was quite a learning process for me. I didn't realize how voluptuous my women are. I found out when we had what was a "**Frazetta** Girl" playing the part, and then we proceeded to just trace her figure from a photograph and there's this little tracing — good grief! There's nothing there. It's that our eyes see . . . make more of it, I guess, or at least, light and shadow enhances it, but when you're just doing an outline, it's gone. So, in order for it to come off, you shoot the outline in flat color to at least come close to looking like some of my overblown characters. You had to exaggerate. Unfortunately, there were some areas that were grossly exaggerated, but those kind of slipped by me. I just didn't see every drawing. But I was there every day for when I was needed after the shooting.

STEVE: *How long were you working on the film? For the whole year and a half?*

FRANK: We actually shot the film live, for maybe a total of eight weeks, something like that. I could be way off on that, but I remember two weeks at a stretch and then a gap and then maybe another two weeks and then a gap and maybe a week, so let's say eight weeks, what the hell. Eight separate weeks and then, of course, the rest was done in the studio. The artists now had all these 8x10s from the whole set-up and so on, and they're

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"I've never seen it in a theatre."

animating. Let's give them credit and give them a half week or something like that. Well, at that point, Ralph and I are discussing the storyline, we're discussing the next shoot. I worked with the artists to see how it's going. I worked with the colorists, and so on, right on down to the final editing and even looping the voices.

STEVE: *How close do you think the colorists came to capturing the vibrancy of your own colors, the subtlety?*

FRANK: The original artwork was very impressive. I, unfortunately, have never seen it in a theatre. I have only seen it on tape. So that I don't really know. I've heard different opinions. Some think the color was great, some said it was flat, so I guess it depends on the print they got, or the quality of the projector or the theatre or what have you, so I just don't know. But I know that Ralph worked real hard on getting the best possible print, but something has to be lost in the transition and was. Even when I bring in my originals and work with the printers, and you cannot get. . . a hundred and fifty different color hues. They're starting with four, so, there's no way you're going to get it and the same with the film, the background artists did some wonderful work. The originals were quite something, and from what I saw on the tape, the background paintings are just nowhere near as magnificent as some of the originals, so they must have lost something even on film, I'm sure.

STEVE: *How would you characterize your experience working with Ralph on the film, over all?*

FRANK: Very enlightening. Different.

STEVE: *You learned a lot about the movie business?*

Listen closely and you'll hear the Duke's deadpan dialogue rolling out of the mouth of this comics depiction by Williamson and Frazetta for JOHN WAYNE #3, from those golden days of yester-year, partner.

FRANK: I think so. I certainly learned that I was very capable of telling a story and moving people around, casting, that sort of thing. Not that I'm a writer, you understand. If you provide me with a good story and I'm inspired by that story and work with the writer and kind of create what he's expressed, I find that I can pretty much make it work visually. But no point in talking about it because my movie didn't go very far. I know that it had some good points, I thought it had some bad points, but I won't take total responsibility for it.

STEVE: *Didn't Ralph re-edit it after you were off the project?*

FRANK: Yes, of course. That was five

"I grew up with guys like that. Believe

or six months, at least, after working with it, and the next time I saw it, it was quite different. But my input was there. I did what I could and I'm very pleased with some of the moments where I did my thing and I did it well, and at times there where certain things I wish I hadn't done, or done it differently, whatever. But Ralph felt very differently; he's got his own ideas about what people react to and they're quite different from mine. Pretty interesting relationship. *(Laughter.)*

STEVE: *Had you done any animation before, back in the '40s or '50s?*

FRANK: Never on film, if that's what you mean. No, I'd never worked on a film.

STEVE: *I know you did some funny animal comics.*

FRANK: Yeah. I can animate comics, that kind of thing. And I can do very humorous, light stuff in lieu of what you see here. I mean, this is heavy. And if you have talent, you can adapt in a whole bunch of areas with something like that. That's talent. A painter is one thing, a draftsman is another, a singer is something else. A guy that knows he's got a natural talent, can pretty much adapt and make almost anything work. That's what I really have basically: talent. Sometimes I feel I have too much and I've never really stayed in one area long enough to perfect it, but that's why I did it. I'm into photography. I know what he's doing with his little Minolta *(Gestures at photographer).* You're going to get the new one with the autofocus button?

STEVE BRYANT: Oh yeah, everything else is automatic.

STEVE: *When I interviewed Harvey Kurtzman, I got a picture of Steve standing behind Harvey going like this (Makes V with fingers to indicate horns.) We were debating whether we should send it to him. We didn't know whether it would appeal to Harvey's sense of humor or not.*

FRANK: It might. *(Laughter.)*

STEVE B.: I can never resist.

FRANK: How is Harvey? I haven't seen him in years. He looked real well. I met his wife. She's a doll. I really liked her. Are they still happy?

STEVE: *Yeah.*

FRANK: I haven't seen him in so many years. He was out here for an exhibit they had in town and I was really a little distressed that he didn't come stop by the house and see me. **Hogarth** did.

STEVE: *Since you did FIRE AND ICE, have there been any more solid film offers?*

FRANK: There've been a few teasers, people talking about what we may do in the future, but nothing really solid. There were a bunch before FIRE AND ICE.

STEVE: *Animated films?*

FRANK: No. Live action, everything, but *not* as a producer. Why would they think of **Frank Frazetta** as a movie producer? I'm an artist. They can't imagine that I can sit there and direct and actually show the stuntmen how to move and leap and twist and turn and bash heads and that kind of thing. They can't conceive of that. They think I just sit around and paint and wonderful things happen. But when I was there, I had the stuntmen learn some things from me.

STEVE: *Yeah, I remember, I think it was in the interview you did with Steranko, you were saying that if you did do another film that you wanted to do a live action film...*

FRANK: Well, Ralph, understandably, didn't think it was possible to do a **Frazetta**-like film live, and I can understand why he felt that. It would be difficult to envision. It would probably be pretty incredible, let's face it. How are you going to get people who look like that?

STEVE: *Where are you going to find someone who looks like your CONAN?*

FRANK: I'll find him.

STEVE: *It might take a little looking.*

FRANK: I'll find him. I grew up with guys like that. Believe me, people are looking in the wrong places. They look in the gym. I wouldn't look in the gym. I'd find the right neighborhood with guys that look like that because of what they eat, and there are guys like that: the scars, the works. Nasty...

STEVE: *You grew up in a pretty tough neighborhood?*

FRANK: Yeah, well, in Brooklyn, you know...

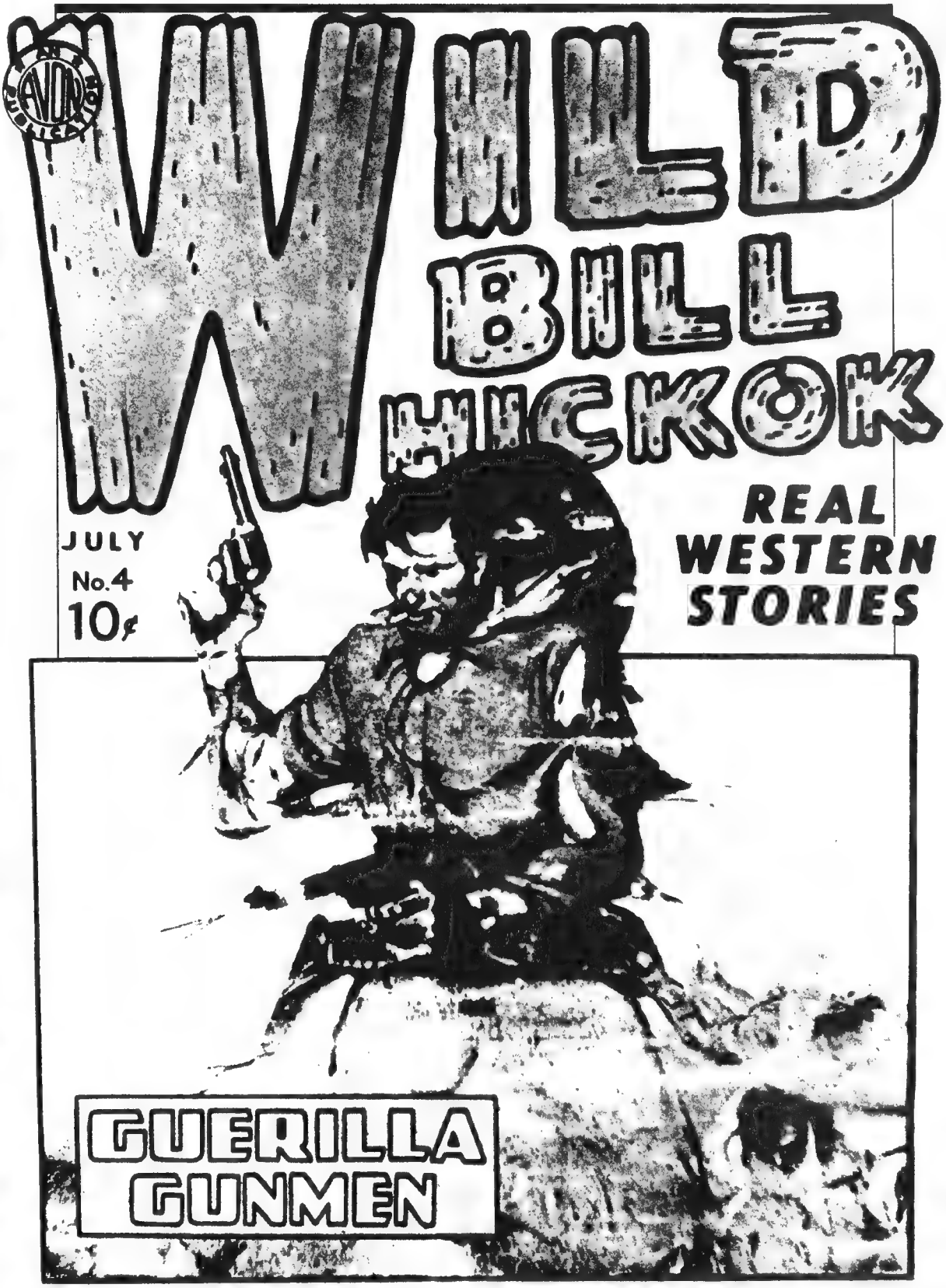
STEVE: *Parts of Brooklyn are still pretty bad.*

FRANK: You're right, in a different way. But I knew guys like that; if you saw them just come after you, boy, you'd just cut across the street. Bruisers, prize fighters. Some big heavyweight who's been

More twists on Frank's western theme, this time — paintings. The one below was painted in black and white, and the opposite one is the first painting Frank had published.

ARTIST

me — the scars, the works. Nasty. . .”



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"Schwarznegger's not a bruiser."

around, could be closer to Conan than some of the actors that have played him. I mean weightlifters are cute and all that, but that's stuff and nonsense. I want a guy who can knock down an oak tree with one swing of an ax. And there are guys like that: incredible strength, brutes, animals.

STEVE: *What did you think of Schwarznegger as CONAN?*

FRANK: He's a nice guy and I know he's a **Frazetta** fan and all that, but he's not a bruiser, he's not a killer. Let's face it.

STEVE: *You know who I thought might have been closer to your CONAN was the guy they had playing CONAN's father: William Smith, with the craggy face...*

FRANK: **William Smith** came out for my movie, by the way. I got to meet him...he's a great guy. I think he's a terrific actor, and a great body.

STEVE: *He always plays bad guys, though.*

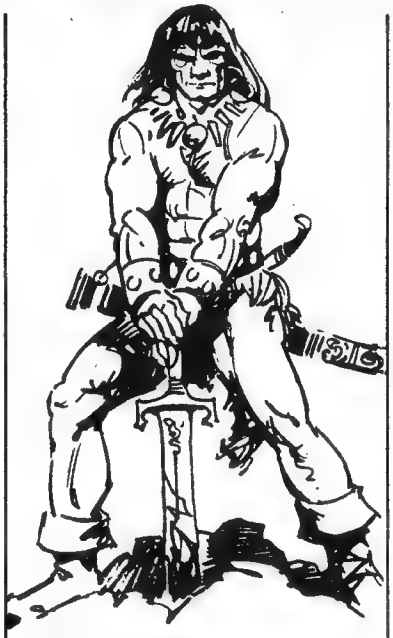
FRANK: Yeah, always has. I don't know why.

STEVE: *I thought he was closer to CONAN than Schwarznegger.*

FRANK: He's a sweetheart. He's far from a bad guy, that's the art of it. He's a good actor, he's very convincing.

STEVE: *He was very good in that movie RED DAWN. He played the Russian colonel.*

FRANK: He came out for the part. I considered him for Darkwolf, he came out and what happened was he got offended when Ralph asked him to run through the park and show his stuff. I know what he can do, and I said, "No, you don't have to do that." He was a fun guy.



Three character studies Frank created for the DeLaurentiis/Schwarznegger CONAN film.

STEVE: *Well, Frank, if it did materialize, what kind of film do you think you'd like to make?*

FRANK: I could certainly do any horror film and do it well. I may not be **Hitchcock**, you know, but I think I could probably produce a horror film that would scare the crap out of you. I mean really do it.

STEVE: *Heart attacks at the premiere, that sort of thing?*

FRANK: Right. I think I could have them really frightened, but I think it would probably be a little old-fashioned. Mine would fit more in the category of the classics, more like the great FRANKENSTEINs, the old ones that had a flavor that they've never really matched. And they tend to overplay and they really don't know...

STEVE: *Now they're going overboard with the gore.*

FRANK: They're going overboard. I don't think it's necessary. I'd like to get the suspense element, you know? And somehow make it exquisitely, beautifully horrible. Yeah, you just sit there and you're titillated, you're really loving it, not being repelled by it. I've seen some of them and you can't sit there and love it; it's disgusting. It's not frightening, it's disgusting. Here's the difference: if you have to frighten people by making them disgusted, that's no way to do it. One of my favorite all-time films is NIGHT OF THE HUNTER. Brilliant, brilliant film. That's the kind of thing I would love to do. I mean, that was a film that was ahead of its time, apparently, because it didn't go anywhere. But anybody with half an ounce of brains realizes its worth. It's an artistic gem. Every shot. At home I have it on tape and I marvel at it. It wasn't fast enough or horrible enough or obvious enough. Brilliant movie. Everybody was brilliant. **Laughton**, whoever deserved the credit for it, really ought to get it. That's what I consider a marvelous film, and you know, the old KING KONG is still great. It'll never die.

STEVE: *Speaking of KONG, when they did the remake, you did a painting of Kong that was on the paperback.*

FRANK: Oh, let's see, I did one for Ace. Did I do both for Ace? One represented the movie, and...**Dino DeLaurentiis** came out to my house. He flew into the little airport out there...and he was dickering about me doing maybe four paintings of King Kong. Four paintings! Good grief. That's a bit of overkill, you know. Let me do one great painting. Then we dickered and nothing ever happened. Then he tried to get me to do more for him, and I did some doodles and nothing

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"They want barbarians with beer cans."

came of that. And anyway, sometimes my approach is a little too artsy-cutesy for these guys. The thing I did Clint, THE GAUNTLET, . . . he said, "I want it to look like *that*," and he'd specify a certain painting, you know, and just go on and on — but how am I going to do that? And that was the one *(Points to the opposite wall)*, DARK KINGDOM, that's the one, the one that had that look. How can I have Clint standing in front of a bus, looking like a barbarian? I said, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to do this, but I'll try." So I made, oh, five or six little sketches, very uncliched **Clint Eastwood** actions, and it wasn't the typical standing tall Clint. See? If you want something different, these are different. Really! Moving quickly, and there's lots of action in spite of that bus just sitting there in the background, and then for good measure, I threw in the standard Clint standing tall, and that's the one they liked. Ellie said, "Don't send that. That's the one they'll pick." I said, "I can't see how. I can't see how," because the others were so good. That's the one they picked. I should have known better.

STEVE: *Why haven't you done more movie poster work, Frank? I know your work's in demand.*

FRANK: I get called all the time for commissions, but some of them are so silly. They want barbarians with beer cans and stuff like that. It's a real total waste of time, you know. I can sit down any day of the week and do ten, fifteen, twenty little drawings and, *Whssst!* Put them into a little book. Well, the poster business does well, so it's not financially compelling. I live off the posters, my kids are doing well. What I am doing is a new series.

STEVE: *I was going to ask you about that. Ellie mentioned that you were doing a new series of the DEATH DEALER character.*

FRANK: It's no big secret. The DEATH DEALER I've got, how many have I done? Four. I don't know if they're as good as that one *(Indicates THE DEATH DEALER on the wall before us)* but, boy, they're damn close.

STEVE: *That same character?*

FRANK: The same character with one difference. This time *I* own him. Not the Howard Estate.

STEVE: *Oh, the Robert E. Howard Estate owns . . .*

FRANK: Conan. But this is my guy, I own him. From the Howard Estate, I got so many negative comments in the past. They hardly acknowledged that I had anything to do with the success of Conan.

STEVE: *What are the DEATH DEALER covers for? Are they going to be paperback covers?*

FRANK: They're going to be paperbacks and whatever else comes after that. And if they want to merchandise it: Good! I mean, what do you do with a death symbol? So I've been supervising the writing and go back and forth with different

The title page of Frank's LORD OF THE RINGS portfolio, put out by Middle Earth in 1975.

© 1975 Frank Frazetta

"Very few people that I know read CONAN."

The dust jacket from AT THE EARTH'S CORE, Edgar Rice Burroughs' Pellucidar series.

writers, having a hell of a time making this guy work. So I've created different worlds and it's a little more believable. But basically, the thing is to have a nice package, a nice cover. Very few people that I know actually read CONAN.

STEVE: *A lot of people just collected them for the covers.*

FRANK: That's right. So I'm not going to concern myself with all that. Hopefully, we'll be getting some nice written material, for sure.

STEVE: *You've commissioned a writer to write stories around this character?*

FRANK: We've gotten this writer and that writer and I've chucked a bunch of them out because I don't think they understood what I'm looking for. It's not that they can't write. They're very competent. This is unusual. This is difficult. It's not a barbarian, it's not a cowboy. What the hell . . . I, myself, hardly know what he is. I just created an image, a one-shot image — you know, my death symbol, on the battlefield — and there he is sitting up on his black horse, and it's *gone*, forever. And to suddenly get this guy and work him "to death," presents a problem. But, I'm going to make it work. If nothing else, you'll see some damn nice pictures.

STEVE: *Are you writing down story ideas, things that come to you when you work on the paintings?*

FRANK: Not really. I'm just visualizing this world that I've conceived of and I just pick a scene, a moment, an action, and try to make it as fairly believable as I can. Those four paintings I have are pretty strange, perhaps a little sinister, a little eerie, you know, and they don't tell you an awful lot. You just know that this guy is strange and he lives in an even stranger place. So, we just hope that the writers can just create this world and work with me on this. **Burroughs** created Pellucidar and places like that, and why not? You can't take yourself all that seriously. It's just entertainment, and I'm an artist, I . . . I learn from my mistakes. It'll be different this time, instead of just being the guy that gets paid a pittance to do the picture and they all get nice and fat and then deny your existence.

STEVE: *Are the DEATH DEALER paintings the first ones you've done since you worked on the film?*

FRANK: No, I've done some little paintings that are not really commercial. I've done some scenic type things and . . . I've done a beautiful painting of a girl riding a horse along a California beach.

STEVE: *Are these things just for yourself?*

FRANK: They're just for myself.

STEVE: *Are they ever going to be seen?*

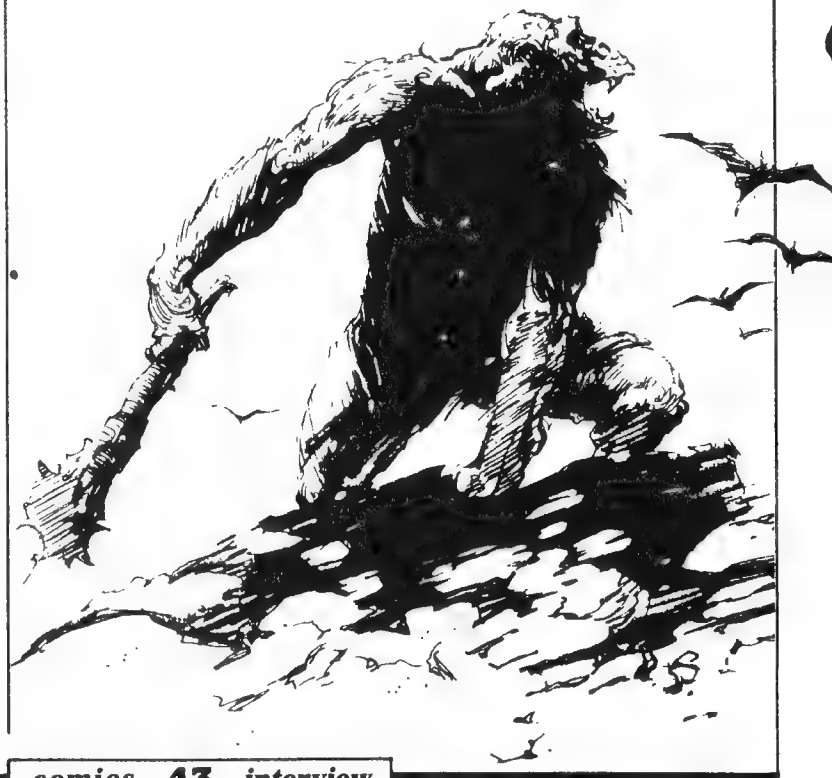
FRANK: Yeah, they'll be printed up.

STEVE: *Maybe in the books?*

FRANK: I don't know. Some of the formats are wrong for paperbacks, you know. They'll be in the Bantam books, or in the calendar. They'll certainly be prints . . .

(Frazetta walks out of mike range to get samples of the museum's poster, then holds them up for display.)

STEVE B.: I was admiring that poster.



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"There are moments when I think I can't

SQUEEZE PLAY
HARRY COWERED AGAINST THE ROUGH CONCRETE PILLAR THAT SUPPORTED THE WEATHER-BEATEN BOARDS OVERHEAD, SUCKING IN THE WARM SUMMER AIR IN GREAT GULPS, TRYING TO CATCH HIS BREATH. THEY WERE AFTER HIM. SOON THEY'D BE SEARCHING DOWN HERE, DOWN IN THE DAMP SAND BENEATH THE BOARDWALK... SEARCHING FOR THE KILLER. HARRY LOOKED AROUND WILDLY. WHERE TO HIDE? WHERE TO RUN? AND THEN HE SAW THE SHIMMERING MASS OF ALMOST NAKED HUMANITY THAT JAMMED THE SUNNY BEACH...
SURE! THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR A GUY IN A T-SHIRT AND DUNGAREES. IF I WERE OUT IN THAT CROWD IN A BATHING SUIT, THEY'D NEVER FIND ME...
FRAZETTA
Copyright © 1954 EC Comics

Opening panels from EC's SHOCK SUSPENSE #13 (March '54). This is the only solo story Frank did for EC.

STEVE: *Oh, two different versions.*
FRANK: One of these, I think the white ones, will be signed, limited editions and these will be purchased, probably at the museum, and/or through the mail, whatever. The painting is representative of the museum itself. But there'll also be, you know, a little print in the book. That's a good idea. *(Turning to the photographer, he holds both posters up for a photo.)* You want them both? A waste of film. It's getting cold in here. I knew it would. Goddamn, there must be a twenty millimeter lens in that. *(Inaudible talking and laughter as Frazetta jokes with Steve Bryant away from the mike.)*
STEVE: *Frank, we touched on this earlier before we started the tape: Do you ever feel confined by what your audience expects from you? Your past performances?*
FRANK: Oh, yes. You betcha. That's called pressure, pally, and I did feel it for quite a while, and perhaps I still do, because it depends on just how high they rate you. If they think you're God's gift to Mankind, what do you do after that? I've had some paintings that I did extremely well, almost beyond my known capacity. I hardly know where they came from, it's almost magical — and why? I don't know. Call it youth, excitement, inspiration, whatever. But sometimes that's not there and now if you're this well-known and this popular, and people are anticipating more of the same, and if you can't turn it on, you worry a lot. Look at singers like **Sinatra** and everything. They have a wonderful voice; at one point everything is like magic until they feel the pressure and suddenly the voice slips a little, you know. I haven't slipped, I just haven't been all that inspired or that hungry or that anxious. But the DEATH DEALER paintings that I've done are at least as good as anything you see here.

do it anymore. The fire isn't there."

And it's more methodical. It's like a job. I've got to do it because I want to get a series out. I don't find myself *really* exhilarated.

STEVE: *You're not really cranked up like you were in, say, the '60s?*

FRANK: Not at all, no. Much more deliberate, very methodical approach. And they're quite good. My approach is so deliberate and so methodical to make sure it looks like it was done with that casual fire.

STEVE: *So, do you think you could say that your approach is a little bit more intellectual than visceral?*

FRANK: Far more. But one thing I do have is an awareness of what I'm all about. I've had peaks and valleys, and I know when I've slipped, and I know when I've lost something or I've gained something, and there are moments when I think: Gee, I can't do it anymore. It's not coming out. The fire isn't there. It's getting awfully mechanical. Still, I noticed the color was better, purer, richer. The design is more effective, stuff like that. The drawing is even more perfect, I think. But that pizazz, something's not there. Part of that reason for the pizazz is that I didn't know as much. . .I just said, "What the hell!" The pizazz is a crazy, wild brushstroke going nowhere and it worked. My instinct made it work because I somehow had a way of disguising a lack of knowledge. But now I know more, and the more you scrutinize your work, the more careful you are in every area. And what this tends to do is inhibit the hell out of you. I'll never get this thing done, you know, if every square inch of the painting has to be perfection: the design, the color, and balance. It's going to slow you down. Pretty much the way I work now and most of the time, it's less fun. But if I'm successful, it almost defies criticism, whereas some of the older work, you love it or you don't and a real critic could find fault if he looked hard enough. Some of the later ones, even if perhaps they lack a certain swashbuckling quality, they're hard to be too critical of. You can't criticize the painting. Everything is in the right place. The drawing's perfect, the balance is right. I don't always enjoy it as much as the older ones, probably for that same reason. It doesn't have that crazy, casual, going-anywhere quality, but I'm aware of that, you see. There's where I'm safe. I'm aware of it. As long as I'm aware of it, I can adjust. I always have in the past. And then, really get back to that kind of a pace. . .and just work hard. Paint a lot. Get crazy. Get freer. But you know the way I work. Hell, I'll let a year go by sometimes, and then

HARRY PULLED HIS T-SHIRT OVER HIS HEAD AND STEPPED OUT OF HIS DUNGAREES...
I'LL BURY MY CLOTHES *HERE* AND COME BACK FOR THEM *LATER*...

HARRY KICKED OFF HIS SHOES AND TUGGED OFF HIS SOCKS. THEN HE KNELT AND SCOOPED A HOLE IN THE DAMP COOL SAND...

Copyright © 1954 EC Comics

"I was growing — I swallowed life up in

A pair of dastardly fiends prepare a nasty hotfoot for roadracing ace Johnny Comet.

I'll sit down: "I think I'll paint a masterpiece." You know, I haven't touched a brush in a *year*. I mean by that you shouldn't be able to draw, after all that time. You should be all thumbs. And sometimes I'll sit down and I *am*. I actually can't draw. But the point is, what I have to do to be at my very best is to start from there. Do a painting, get all the bugs out — it may not be best, but go right on to the next one, and you'll have learned a lot from that warm-up. It's a simple way to put it. You learn a lot. You're going to make a lot of mistakes, struggle and zip into the next one. Think about a boxer going into training. I don't want to overtrain, so I guess you gotta work up to it. And if I do that, by the time I get to painting number three, providing it's been spontaneous, one right after another, I will suddenly start getting the fire back and I'll be in a groove, as they say. And if I maintain it, I can do 'em that fast — and I will do some pretty spectacular paintings. I never can get myself to maintain it. I just feel like doing two or three, and then I sit on my laurels, I rest, and then I just cool off again. That's what I did when I did all those paintings, I just kept going.

STEVE: *When you were doing all the CONAN paintings, were you doing them right in a row, one after another?*

FRANK: Right in a row.

STEVE: *Really? What kind of time frame are you talking about? How long did it take you to do all these?*

FRANK: Well, I was doing a painting — I was working fast, and I was doing drawings. I was drawing as well, and that's the difference. I was having fun drawing and I was meeting other artists in the old Spang and Keller, and you know, it was like a young, happy time. It was like a new ballgame, and I was excited and I was growing and learning and swallowing everything. I swallowed life up in one big gulp, and boy, this was all new. Now I've done all that and either I get off the train again and experience a new approach, or

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one big gulp, and boy, this was all new."

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I'll just be bored to death. But I can't, because art has to be fun, and much as I appreciate the fans wanting to see more of the same, it's not fun for me and I regret it. The trick is, can I look at that through different eyes now and still move the audience? Or is it like a lot of people like to think, the subject matter and just good timing? I've always been accused of having excellent timing.

STEVE: *Talent had nothing to do with it?*
FRANK: No, no. Just timing. Actually, I've had artists say that to me: "**Frazetta**'s got good timing, that's all." Just timing. He's always had that. The world was just ready for Conan the Barbarian. It was also ready for **Frazetta**'s scenes of **Edgar Rice Burroughs**. Twice. And PHOENIX PRIME, THE SEA WITCH, all that art I did for Warren; it was always waiting for me. It's interesting. Well, let's see if they're ready for CAT GIRL. I guess my timing's right. That and the fact that I originally painted it in 1966.
STEVE: *When you're painting, describe your working habits, how you get into a painting, how you work up the idea.*
FRANK: It seems I have a backlog, you know, of pictures in my head, really unpainted pictures, and it really doesn't take

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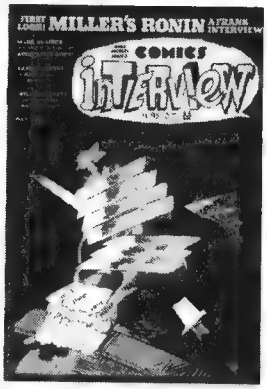

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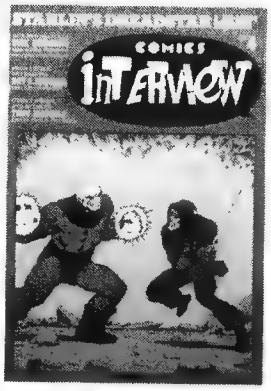

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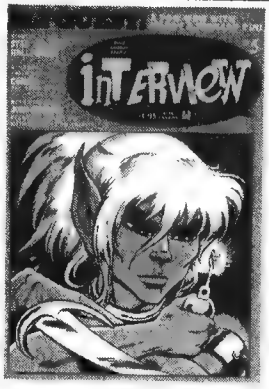

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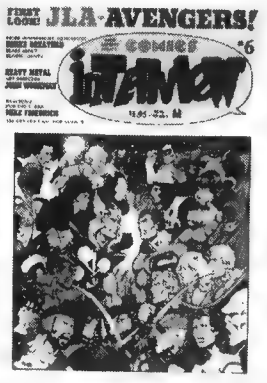

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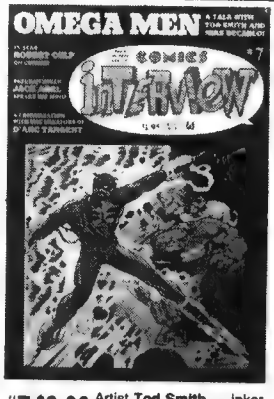

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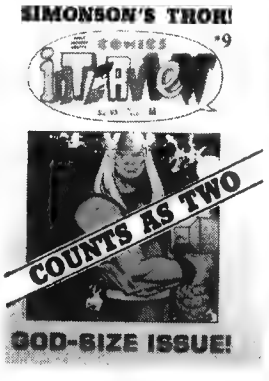

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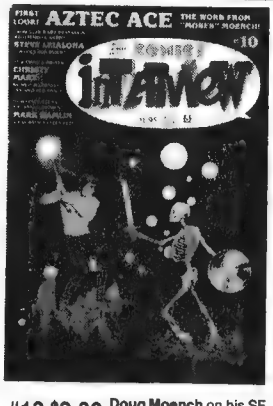

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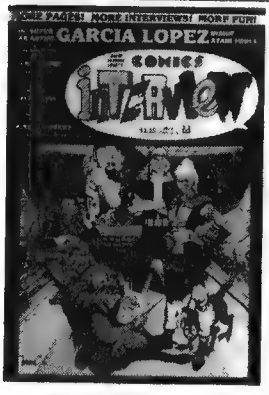

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"I like to confound my peers..."

Four shots of the famous early action-adventure movie star Buster Crabbe, from BUSTER CRABBE COMICS, circa 1950. In those days Frank earned the moniker "The Buster Crabbe drawer of all times."

an awful lot for me to decide to start it moving after that. Forget the backlog. Suddenly, I want to paint something different, new. The word different is very important... **Krenkel** used to laugh at me, "Boy, you'd be different just for different's sake." And he's right. I really would. I like to confound my fellow artists or peers for a minute. I like them to look at my paintings and say, "Not only is it good, but how the hell did he dream that up?" You know? This is really part of the game. Not just repeating the old stories, doing something technically perfect and wonderful and rich and all that stuff. Different, like maybe THE SPIDERMAN, with that strange, eerie circle of color: red, green, a little blotch of green. I've been asked what it is. I don't know. I just thought green would look good right about there. You just know instinctively it belongs there. There is no explaining it. So when I paint, there's an expression, a creature, a look, a movement, an action that's maybe even contorted, bent out of shape, and it works. The trick is that it has to work. And that's what I take great pride in, I think. I'm far less concerned about whether the anatomy is perfect and whether what they're doing is physically possible. I couldn't care less as long as *you're* convinced. And, in fact, the more I can stretch that and bend it and contort it and make it work, the more pleased I am if it sells. You know what I mean?

STEVE: *Uh-huh.*

FRANK: That's the challenge, I guess.

STEVE: *To sort of take reality and —*

FRANK: Oh, kick the hell out of it, and have people just wonder about it, "How in the name of God did you dream that up?" That's the imagination part of it, and I think, in a sense, that's what I work hardest at. The actual drawing comes so easily to me you wouldn't believe it.

STEVE: *You've had enormous technical facility for years.*

FRANK: I can draw so easily that it's why I draw like that. I can probably draw anything under any conditions, doing anything you can dream of, and it's : "How beautiful is it? How magnificent? How unusual is it? How different? How exciting? How wonderful?" All those things. Not just drawing a perfect figure. I'm sure you've met comic-book artists that sit there and look at the line work. I don't give a shit about that line work. What's that saying? Is it different? Is it sparkling? Is it just meat you control? I couldn't care less about that. You've seen my early work just lie. I could draw circles with a brush, or a pen. Backwards, forwards, back part of the pen, anything. And so, who cares? That's not all. That's just some kind of strange little skill you might develop. It has nothing to do with the statement. And everything that can be done, has been done. What does **Frazetta** do possibly different? But this is where I'm at: always different, a different look, a fresh look. That's the reason my stuff is really still alive and well, because really, most of these concepts are so different. They're all the same now because they're all **Frazettas,** been around for all these years, but they're all different. Each and every one had a look about it that you never tired of, and I worked very hard at getting in this kind of lasting quality, whatever that is. Perhaps it's a certain flow, like good music. I mean, why else are some pieces of music classics? They last forever, you never tire of them. Others catch you for a moment and they're gone forever. How do you explain that? I mean, why is that? I mean, you're using notes;

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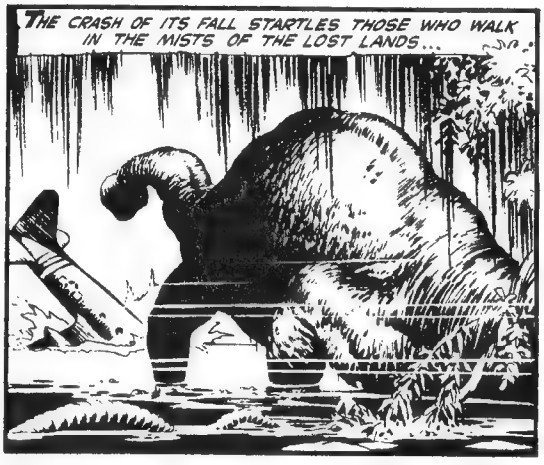
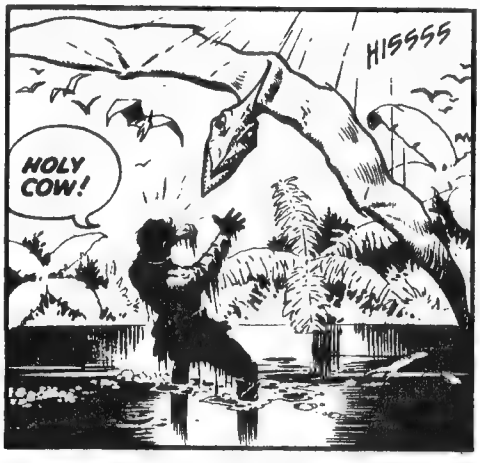
"Why do we like pleasing shapes? I don't

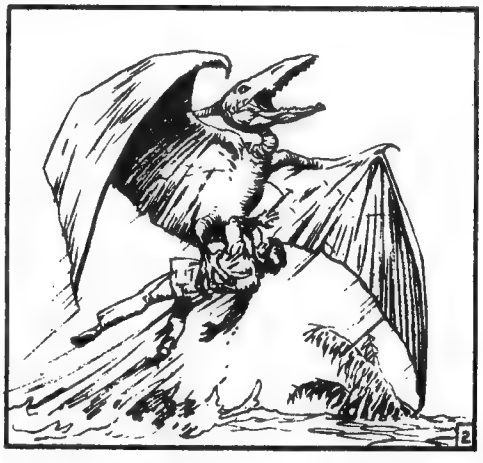
one note following another note, following another note, so why is it that this particular piece died in a week and this one goes on for fifty years? It's hard to say. It's hard to measure the quality and balance and the beauty, whatever it is. And this is what I try to get in some of the paintings. A lot of them have so many subtleties that are immediately overlooked by the average layman or fan. They just look and say: "Oh, great figure!" Or great this or that, and overlook all the little

BONUS!! On this spread and the following page we've reprinted three pages from the only full comic book entirely drawn by Frank. THUN'DA, from 1952, script by Gardner Fox.



RAGE FLOODS THE JUNGLE MONSTER! HIS HEAD SWINGS AND HIS JAWS TIGHTEN! AS A DOG WOULD SHAKE A RAT, HE SHAKES THE BIG PLANE—AND A LIMP FIGURE DROPS EARTHWARD...





know. But we do. Buttocks? Exciting."

subtleties that are building up to this point. As you go back, you go back to find it, you'll find more and you'll find more, and the more there is, the longer it lasts. It's as simple as that, providing everything is well thought-out, perfectly balanced, and the shapes are pleasing. Why do we like pleasing shapes? I don't know. But we do. Buttocks? Very exciting.

STEVE: *Nice and round.*

FRANK: A silly, simple shape like that and we're intrigued, because it's perfect. Why? I don't know. Ask him. *(Points at the photographer.)*

STEVE: *Is that one of the things you got*

A MAN! BUT— BUT HE IS NO CAVE-MAN! HE—HE LOOKS LIKE ONE OF US! PERHAPS THERE ARE MORE ENEMIES THAT WE OF SHAREEN MUST FACE! SIGH!
WE MUST TAKE NO CHANCES! THE MEN AND WOMEN OF SHAREEN ARE SO FEW IN NUMBER, WE DARE NOT BE SEEN BY OTHER ENEMIES!
ALONE IN THE JUNGLE, ROGER DRUM SETS TO WORK, CHOOSING A LEAN SAPLING FOR ITS STRENGTH.
A BOW AND ARROWS— AND HOURS OF LONG PRACTICE—WILL DO THE TRICK!
DAILY HE DRIVES HIMSELF FOR MILE-LONG RUNS.
THE DAYS FADE INTO WEEKS, AND THE WEEKS INTO MONTHS, AND NOW ROGER DRUM IS STRAIGHT AND POWERFUL, MUSCLES RIDGING HIS BACK AND ARMS, HIS LONG LEGS AND POWERFUL THIGHS...
WITH A ROPE TWISTED FROM JUNGLE LIANAS, HE SWOOPS LIKE A DARTING FALCON FROM THE JUNGLE TREES, SNATCHING ITS PREY FROM THE SABRETOOTH TIGER ITSELF!
NAY, BROTHER LONG-FANGS! LET THE RABBIT RUN A FEW MORE DAYS!
THROUGH THE SILENCE OF THE MISTY LANDS —A WOMAN'S SCREAM RINGS LOUD!
A WOMAN— CRYING IN FEAR!
AIIIEEEE!
6

"That's what separates men from boys."

out of your classical art training with your teacher back when you were a kid?

FRANK: No, no. Not at all. That was instinctive since I was three years old. I've always had that feeling, and I love pairs, certain images and the way they move. And that's another thing. I guess we left out the, probably the most important word of all. I suppose you can learn to draw, you can learn to paint. You may even do very well at design, you know, whatever the ingredients are that make a nice piece

A MAD TORRENT OF WEIRD HISSING SWINGS THE AVIATOR AROUND! TOWERING HIGH ABOVE HIM—EMERGING FROM THE LABYRINTHINE DEPTHS OF THE CAVE BEHIND THE DRUM...
A SNAKE—THE FATHER OF ALL SNAKES!
BEFORE THE FEAR-FROZEN CAVE PEOPLE CAN MOVE, THE GIANT HEAD FLASHES DOWNWARD!
GOT TO—KILL IT—SOMEHOW!
NO GOOD! ARROWS DON'T HURT IT...!
MY GUN! GOT THREE SHOTS LEFT! MY ONLY HOPE IS THAT ONE OF THEM LODGES IN IT'S BRAIN!
WITH THE SNAKE'S FANGS BEFORE HIS VERY EYES, HIS LAST BULLET REACHES ITS RESTING PLACE—AND WITH A FRIGHTFUL HISS, THE GIGANTIC SERPENT WRITHES IN DEATH...
THUN'DA — LORD OF THE MAGIC DRUM! THUN'DA — WHO KILLED THE SNAKE THAT SURROUNDS THE WORLD! THUN'DA — KING OF THE LOST LANDS!
AND SO, ROGER DRUM, WHO IS HENCEFORTH TO BE KNOWN AS THUN'DA, COMES AT LAST TO PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP WITH THE QUEEN OF THE VALLEY PEOPLE... AND WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE CAVES...!
10

"Some of their actions are erotic."

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of work; the last word, but far from least, is taste. I don't pretend to have the most perfect taste, but I think *that's* what separates the men from the boys: taste. Knowing what to leave out. And when you do put it in there, it's just the right thing, and it's in just the right place, and it's done with taste so that you're not offended. It could be sensuous as hell but the taste makes it even more sensuous and not a bit offensive.

STEVE: *Well, the sexuality in your paintings is always there. That sensuousness is always present, but it never bubbles out and gives you too much.*

FRANK: I try not to. I go to extremes, I suppose, in the physical dimensions of the people, and some of their actions are extremely erotic, in the way they move, and if there's more of a fluid feel in that movement that I can paint beyond, then I'm going to go out for shape. There's more a feeling of texture, the flesh is somehow softer and more flexible and more real. The colors are designed so that they really identify, "Yes, that's skin." Fur is fur and so on. Textures are important. But it's . . . taste is in, I don't know, selection of the action, the expression. Just how much or how little.

STEVE: *It all goes back to what you were saying about being a storyteller, choosing which story you tell, which moment you stop the camera at.*

FRANK: Exactly. That's what I've got to do. I don't get it first shot. Don't misunderstand me. I don't sit there and say, "Put the pen to the paper and draw the action," and it's perfect. No, not at all. If I do, it's pure luck. But I know in the back of my mind that it should, you know, have a certain mood and a certain quality and I'll kick it around like a sculptor, you know? Nope. I'll draw, say, a leopard, and I'll have it moving in a certain manner, and I'll say, "Well, it's all right. It's perfectly okay. I mean they do walk like that and they could look like this, but it's not lending just that right look, you know what I mean? I may have his paws a little limp and it looks funny. That's the difference, you know? The perfect moment or the not-so-perfect moment. Just where is the head? Here? Here? Here? Like move it along, an expression, how far I can tilt the head? Where does that girl really seem to all come together? When you find it, you just love it, even if you don't know why you love it. Instinctively, all of us react to the same things. Some of us can't intellectualize about it. You just say, "Hey, man! That's cool."

STEVE: *Do you think that's one of the reasons why your stuff is that popular?*

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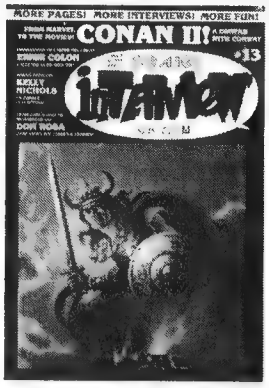

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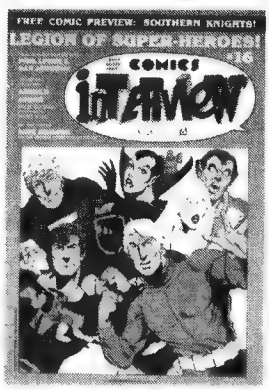

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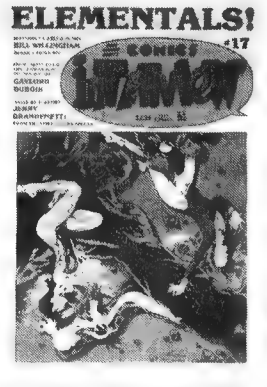

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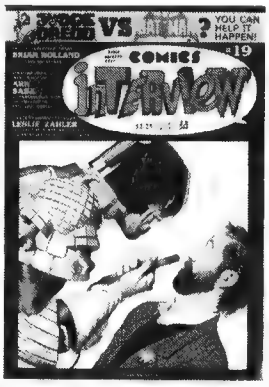

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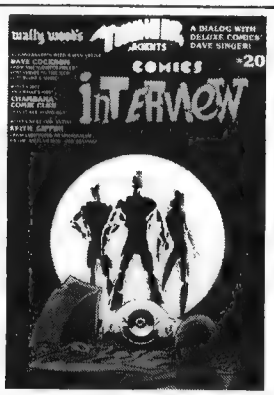

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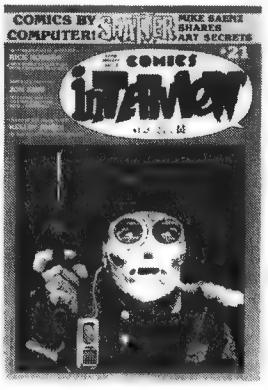

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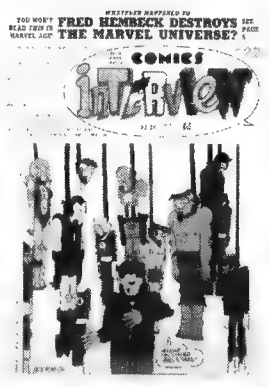

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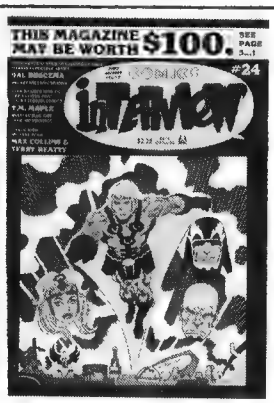

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"I have all the tricks and gimmicks."

You've got a mass audience that cuts across cultural barriers.

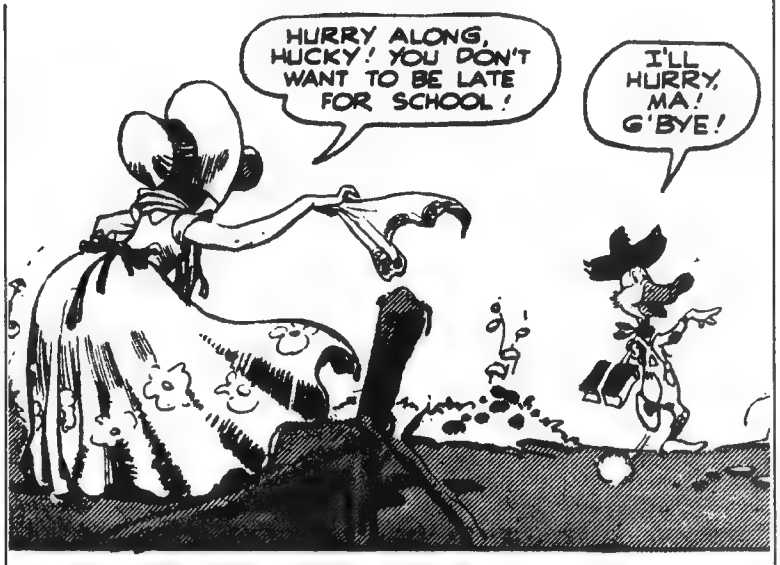
FRANK: Exactly. Because I've considered everybody's intelligence, from the teenyboppers right on up. The teenyboppers will look at it for all the superficial qualities and identify with it, but they'll also be excited by the shapes — not knowing this, you understand. They will not know it, that that's what's really focusing them to where I've led them. The intellectuals, on the other hand, will just bypass the obvious and move around in the background.

STEVE: *All that subliminal stuff you put in.*

FRANK: Exactly. So, I have all the little tricks and gimmicks, but that's perfectly legit, because it's still honest. If I get really super-intellectual, of course, what happens is that I stumble all the little teenyboppers and people like that. But I know everybody will get a big kick out of it, and that's why this information's successful, because the kiddies buy it for their reasons, the next group buys it for their reasons, college professors buy it for their reasons. My stuff's being taught in college art classes for a pretty good reason, too, and yet you've got eight-year-olds buying it. Strange. The eight-year-olds are not buying **Rembrandt**, **Michelangelo**. Isn't that a fact?

STEVE: *Sure.*

FRANK: Not because I'm better but because I'm interesting. Their stuff is done on a certain level for a certain class of people. I'm a salesman. I grab 'em all, but not at the sacrifice of quality. That's not easy. I've covered the spectrum. I guess. Probably the most incredible thing to me is: I entertain everybody.



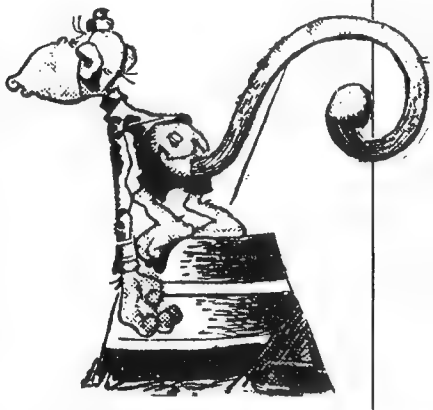
Another genre many fans don't associate with Frank — funny animals, from the late '40s.

STEVE: *I'm sure you don't lose too much sleep over that.*

FRANK: Not too much. Not lately. But you hit it. That's really the funny part about my work, and it's also criticized for that: Well, it can't be any good if fourteen-year-olds like it. Generally that's true, because they're not educated. They couldn't possibly know about the many varied little nuances in a good piece of art, so they're going to look for stuff that's rather simple and obvious and at the worst, it could even be tasteless. On some token, I'm sure that many of the, say, thirteen or fourteen-year-olds that love my stuff couldn't tell me from my imitator or care less. That's okay. They'll end up buying me, too, you know. But I enjoy it because of the people that really are into what I do and really understand what I've done and really can intellectualize about it. You cannot educate everyone. And I don't know that I've tried — but in a sense, I have, because what happened to me was, those kids grew up. They liked my work at ten, and grew up and said, "You know, he's better than we thought when we were ten." And when they got to be thirty, "better than we thought when we were twenty." It's very interesting. I'm very flattered. So I'm just telling you up front that the stuff's going to be around for a long time. A lot of it is better than most people think, or did think in the first place. That's another reason I kept the art, because they didn't know how good it was. I'm sure you heard the old story of **Bill Gaines** and that FAMOUS FUNNIES cover. Did you hear anything about that?

STEVE: *That was the only time he printed something that he didn't own, wasn't it? That one cover?*

FRANK: I did that for FAMOUS FUNNIES. They rejected it because it was violent and **Bill Gaines** had brought over the guys at EC and they flipped out. "Can we print it?" And **Bill Gaines** had a policy, you know, he kept all art, which was okay, but I said, "No, sorry, Bill. You can't have this one." Because I knew



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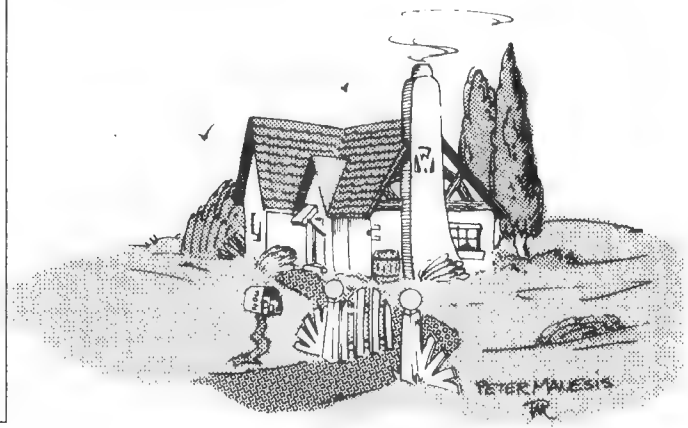

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"He says 'Jesus Christ! Look out!'"

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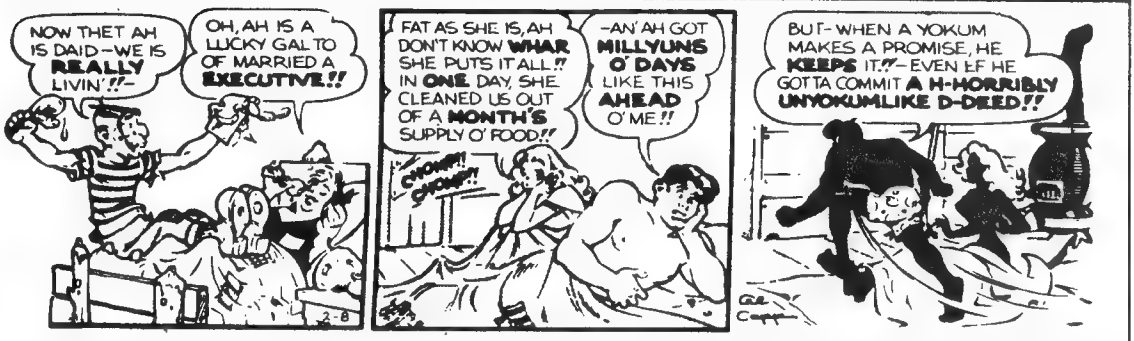

NOW THET AH IS DAID—WE IS REALLY LIVIN'!!—
OH, AH IS A LUCKY GAL TO OF MARRIED A EXECUTIVE!!
FAT AS SHE IS, AH DON'T KNOW WHAR SHE PUTS IT ALL!! IN ONE DAY, SHE CLEANED US OUT OF A MONTH'S SUPPLY O' FOOD!!
-AN' AH GOT MILLYUNS O' DAYS LIKE THIS AHEAD O' ME!!
CHOMP! CHOMP!!
BUT- WHEN A YOKUM MAKES A PROMISE, HE KEEPS IT.!!—EVEN EF HE GOTTA COMMIT A H-HORRIBLY UNYOKUMLIKE D-DEED!!

Above: The LIL' ABNER daily syndicated strip, which Frank penciled for Al Capp for almost a decade. Below: The perils of dope!

it was that good. No way he's gonna get that for thirty bucks. He's gonna use it on the cover and keep that. I knew all that stuff was priceless. But that particular piece is still a doozy today, even now. Priceless. And I'm going to give it to **Bill Gaines** because his policy is to keep the originals? No way. I'll tell you what, sixty bucks. Sixty bucks is what he paid — I beg your pardon, I got that backwards — it became thirty bucks and I'd keep the art. Bill jumped up: "You got it!" Thirty bucks was a big deal, you know, in those days. Thirty bucks I got. I didn't care. I'd have let him print it for nothing. I just wanted to see it printed. There was no way I was giving that away. I hate to tell you how much I've been offered for that.

STEVE: *That piece?*

FRANK: Yeah.

STEVE: *I love it. It's been called the single greatest piece of comic art that anybody ever did.*

FRANK: It is. It really is. I say that with all modesty. If I saw something better, I'd be the first to admit it, but I haven't. And I know **Berni Wrightson**'s been giving it some good shots. He's trying. A lot of guys have tried. And I did that overnight. I happened to be sitting in **Al Capp**'s studio, and I did it overnight. That's me. Just call me Mr. Overnight. **Capp** left me there at the office. "Are you gonna stay here?" "Yeah, I got this cover to do." He came in in the morning. He says: "Jesus Christ! Look out!" I didn't even know . . . I just went beyond myself. That's *wild*! I mean I was just, *Shooooo! (Makes rocket noise)*. I could make pen and ink, or brush and ink, or whatever — a combination of both, actually — talk, in those days. Even if I can criticize it for some of it that's overdone, but what the hell, I was only a kid. I was only about 24.

STEVE: *What size was the original on this?*

FRANK: A standard comic-book page.

STEVE: *About the same size anybody else did covers, right? Why didn't you do any more Buck Rogers covers after that last one? Because they rejected that one?*

FRANK: They stopped.

STEVE: *Oh, they stopped publishing?*

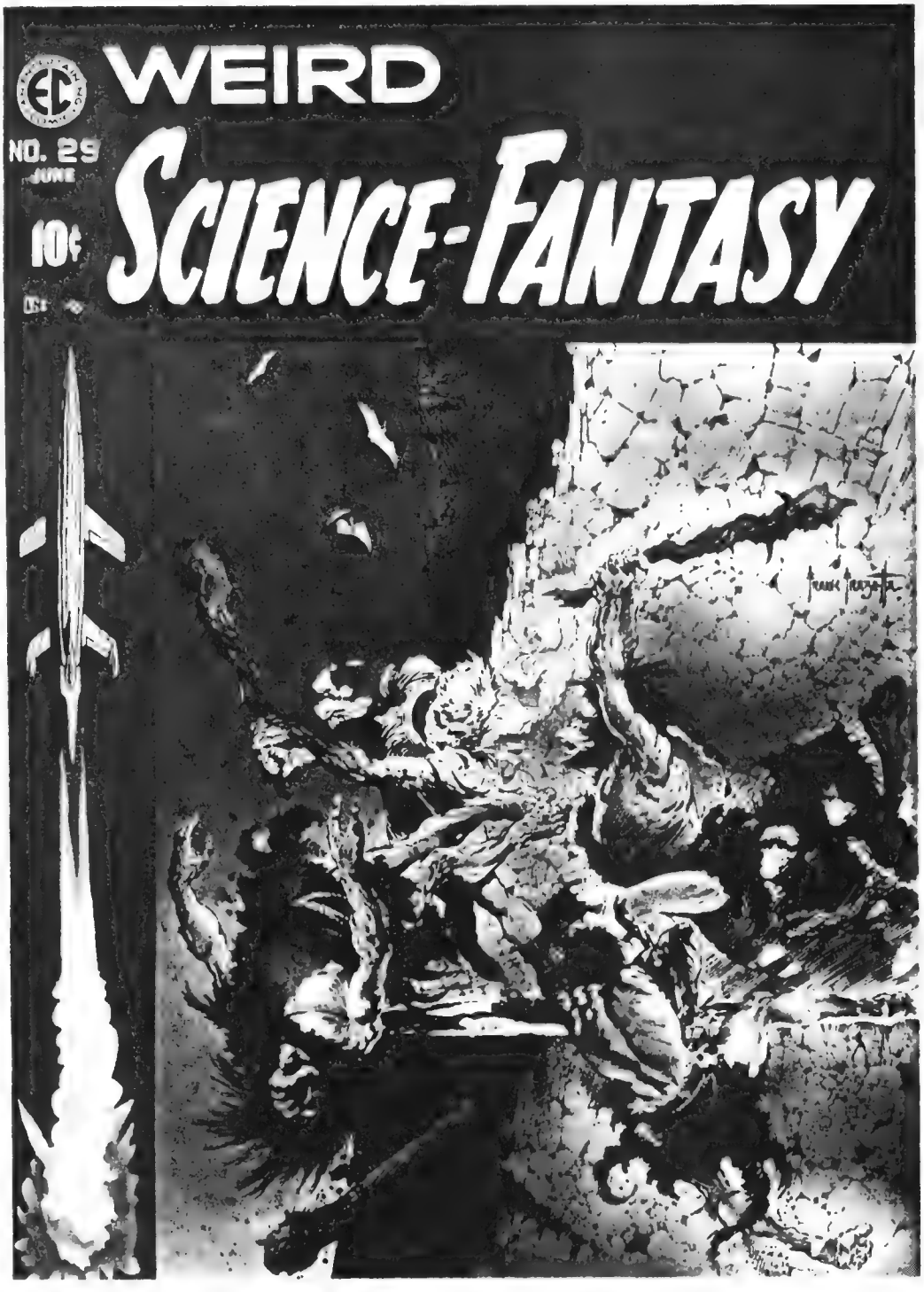
FRANK: They just stopped as far as I know.

STEVE: *That was Dell, right? I think they went out of business.*

WE CAN STOP the ENEMIES OF YOUTH
IF YOU WANT TO GET ON THE INSIDE WITH SOME SMART FELLOWS... JOIN UP WITH US!
THIS BOY BECAME ADDICTED TO DOPE AND HAD TO SELL DOPE TO OTHERS TO GET SOME FOR HIMSELF.
HE'S A DOPE FIEND! WE'D BETTER KEEP AWAY FROM HIM!
SICK AND DESPERATE, THE BOY ROVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE, SEEKING DOPE AND GIVING UP HIS TRUE FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS...
THE DOPE MENACE IS INJURING OUR YOUTH... GIRLS AND YOUNG MEN ARE ROBBED OF THEIR RIGHT TO HAPPINESS BY CRUEL AND DANGEROUS CHARACTERS WHO INDUCE THEM TO FALL PREY TO DOPE... ALL YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD REPORT DOPE PEDDLERS TO THEIR PARENTS, THEIR CLERGYMEN, THEIR TEACHERS, THE POLICE, OR THE NEAREST SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY... THE COMICS MAGAZINE INDUSTRY PLEDGES ITSELF TO AID YOUNGSTERS IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF YOUTH— THE DOPE PEDDLERS...

"I'm very sensitive to some of the

Frank's cover for WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY #29, on this page, and its original version (opposite) as a Buck Rogers cover for FAMOUS FUNNIES. This has been called the greatest comic book cover of all time.



pettiness of art directors, you know."

WELL HELLO DARLINGS... I'M AUNT VICKY, YOUR DELECTABLE LI'L "STORY LADY" I'M HERE TODAY TO TELL YOU A LITTLE MYSTERY STORY ABOUT THE 'LAUNCH COMIC CAPER..: IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH MISINFORMATION IS FLOATING AROUND ABOUT LAUNCH...FIRST IT'S SAID TO BE A "TRY OUT" BOOK...BUT IT'S NOT...THEN WE HEAR IT'S ABOUT CATS... WELL THERE IS ONE CAT, CHUCK MORRIS, WHO IS NOT AT ALL FINICKY ABOUT GIVING YOU A BOP ON THE CHOPS... THEN THERE'S A RATHER STRANGE CHARACTER CALLED THE CONSCIENCE... FORMER EDITOR OF A GREAT METRO-POLITAN NEWSPAPER WHO'S REINCARNATED AS ...WHAT ELSE..??
NO, NOT A WEASEL..! MOST EDITORS ARE THAT ALREADY..! OH BUT NEVER MIND ... I MYSELF AM CAMEOING IN "LI'L RED RIDIN' RABBIT" ..WHICH YOU MAY HAVE HEARD IS ABOUT CUTEY BUNNY...BUT IT'S NOT..! IT'S ABOUT HER ROTTEN LITTLE SISTER TAFFY..! SO WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS..? WELL THE SUSPECTS INCLUDE: SPARKY MOORE...MOST OF YOU HAVE SEEN HIS WORK IN NEWSPAPERS, BUT NOT HIS SIGNATURE... TOM LUTH, DYN-AMITE COLORIST... KEN JONES, BOY EDITOR...AN SOMEONE CALLED JOSHUA QUAGMIRE..CAN'T QUITE PLACE THE NAME, BUT HIS DRAWING LOOKS FAMILIAR...AND YOU HAVE IT ALL ON THE BEST AUTHORITY FROM "ELSEWHERE PROD"...SO WHERE IS ELSEWHERE..? NOBODY SEEMS TO KNOW...NO WONDER YOU CAN'T GET A STRAIGHT ANSWER OUT OF THEM... THEN WHO'S THE GUILTY PARTY? DID THE EDITOR DO IT..? THE PUBLISHER..! THEY SAY "THE BUTLER DID IT...AN BESIDES, IT WAS TWO OTHER GUYS WHO LOOK JUS' LIKE THEM..." PERSONALLY, I THINK THE STORYS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES... I'D TELL YOU MORE...BUT GOTTA FLY...I'VE GOT A DATE WITH A BUNNY.. TOODLES...
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"I had nothing against PLAYBOY."

FRANK: That was Buck Rogers done for FAMOUS FUNNIES. **Steve Douglas**, the guy I was working with, who I dearly loved, suddenly died . . . I think somewhere around then. He got sick and died. I didn't want to work for the rest of them just then. I had friendships and I worked only for the people I liked. Like, I'm very sensitive to some of the pettiness of art directors, you know. They can't understand an artist, the true artist.

STEVE: *You had that problem with PLAYBOY for a while, didn't you? You swore for years you'd never work for them, and then you went back and did that one painting for them.*

FRANK: What happened there . . . I had nothing against PLAYBOY or **Hugh Hefner** or any of those people. I didn't even know anyone. And the fact is, many years ago, supposedly and I say supposedly — **Al Capp**'s brother showed **Hefner** some of my little cutesy drawings, you know, with the little women and that kind of thing, which I thought would be very appropriate for PLAYBOY, and according to **Capp** — you know, it may be bullshit — but **Hefner** thought it was very nice, but it didn't seem right for PLAYBOY, which I found I was very offended by. I thought it was perfect for PLAYBOY. It had little bouncing boobs and wonderful little chicks and all you needed was a little punchline, you know. I said, "What? Are you kidding?" So I took that to heart. But the truth is, now it's very possible that they were never shown. But I did some work for PLAYBOY on "Little Annie Fanny." But that was hard work. I love **Harvey Kurtzman** but that's hard work.

STEVE: *Were you doing actual painting on the pages?*

FRANK: Yeah.

(The interview moves to **Frazetta**'s studio where next to his easel, bearing an unfinished oil painting that he was working on, the unfinished originals for the new DEATH DEALER series lay stacked against one wall.)

STEVE: *Frank, along with your enormous popularity as a painter, you've had to deal with being one of the most plagiarized artists of the century. I was just wondering what goes through your head when you see one of your paintings airbrushed on the side of a van, or done on somebody's T-shirt?*

FRANK: I don't feel too concerned about that. I think that's kind of cute, when someone — you know, a novice, a child, a little boy — sits there and paints his motorcycle. I think that's precious. I really like it. I just worry about them capitalizing on it, and working for a company and mass-producing these sort of things, or making a lot of bucks off of me.

STEVE: *I've even seen tattoos of some of your designs.*

FRANK: Have you?

STEVE: *Yeah.*

FRANK: Well, legally they can't do it, but I don't concern myself. I'm not too thrilled with other artists ripping me off left and right, especially when they take credit for creating work that I've created. Copying my style? Well, that's another story. But literally copying concepts and characters and costumes and all, that's going a bit far. That's pretty blatant.

STEVE: *I remember one of the Burroughs films with Doug McClure had some scene compositions, and certain frames were like exact ripoffs of one of your paintings . . .*

One of Frank's watercolors from the early '50s, during the period when he was ghosting LIL' ABNER.

"If you have nothing to say, get the

IN THE OFFICE OF NATIVE AFFAIRS, GONTEEKWA VALLEY, AFRICA...
SO NOW YOU CAN SEE WHY WE SENT FOR YOU, DEMMON.
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE IN THIS TERRITORY WITH BIG-GAME HUNTING EXPERIENCE TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS MYSTERY. IF YOU CAN DO IT, MY PEOPLE WILL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL.

"Werewolf" from Warren's CREEPY magazine (1964) marks the last time Frank worked in comics.

FRANK: Oh, yeah? Obviously, I didn't see it.

STEVE: *It was one of the LAND THAT TIME FORGOT movies.*

FRANK: Oh, yeah?

STEVE: *Yeah, and what it was, was on the set, they had these paintings on the walls that were ripoffs of your stuff. That one painting with the sorceress and the giant, the black woman with the snake wrapped around her.*

FRANK: Really?

STEVE: *Yeah, and that was done on the wall in this one film.*

FRANK: And used as a backdrop?

STEVE: *Yeah, it was a background in a scene. It was THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, or THE PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT, one of those.*

FRANK: Damn! Good thing, lucky for them, Ellie didn't see it.

STEVE: *She's pretty ferocious about taking care of your rights?*

FRANK: Yeah. . . She really gets pretty adamant about it. I guess I'm just getting used to it, and as long as people appreciate what I did and give credit where it's due, I'm satisfied. I've heard things quoted like, they list **Frazetta** and they mention three or four other artists, "school of art," in quotes. They're talking about me and three or four imitators, and they're throwing me in there, it's a so-called "school of art." Me, and Joe Schmoe and Jack Schmotz and Freddy Birnbaum, you know. School of art? What the hell are they talking about? That's really irritating.

STEVE: *It's sort of like throwing you in with all those other guys, like the Brandywine school.*

FRANK: They're throwing me in with them, and they came, like, thirty years later. And it's suddenly a school of art, and I'm a member, you know?

STEVE: *Your style, the style you've created, is so ubiquitous it's entered mass consciousness.*

FRANK: That's their argument. I've been told by some imitators that, "Gee, Frank, we can't help but look at your work, and it's like, that's the only way to go." And of course, I find that ludicrous to say the least. You've seen for yourself the variety of styles that I have right here, from the funny animals to the silly little cartoons to the heavy stuff to the light and silly. The style, the paint technique, is irrelevant. There's no one style of paint application. That's silly, I mean **Howard Pyle** and any number of illustrators apply paint in their own way and it's magnificent. What's the difference? It's not the style or the way you apply the paint. It's what you say. It's the statement you make with the art. Now, how could someone sit there, look at me and say,"That's the only way to do it." What are they referring to, the colors? The way I apply paint? No, they're talking about just plain ripping off the figures and concepts. There is no such thing, "that's the only way to go." I just select a peak action and use it. You know, they can find their own peak somewhere. That's all there is to it. There's no point in saying that's the only way a girl should be sitting on that damn horse, you know. Yet, as a matter of fact, I think I've painted her about ten different ways, and couldn't decide which I liked best, and at this point I'm not even sure I'll stay with that. How can I go and take one look and say, that's it! So if they were to decide to paint the same scene, well, the girl would be in exactly the same position, which is really odd. I can consider countless actions, and it would work. And just out of sheer pride, they might at least try to be a little honest and a little creative and a little personal. You know I've never really swiped that I could think of, and if I have, it was so minuscule it's ridiculous. And I pride myself on that because that's the whole joy. I can't, frankly, look at any of my artwork if I know that I've lifted it. I just never get the same joy out of it, and I can't pretend to sit there in pride and watch people admiring it and saying, "Wow, how did he think of that one?" if in fact someone else did it first. It's pretty dumb. And they worry too much about opening themselves to ridicule if it's less than perfect or less than wonderful, which happens if you use a crutch. I'd rather that it's less than perfect. I think that's the essence of it. It can be less than perfect,

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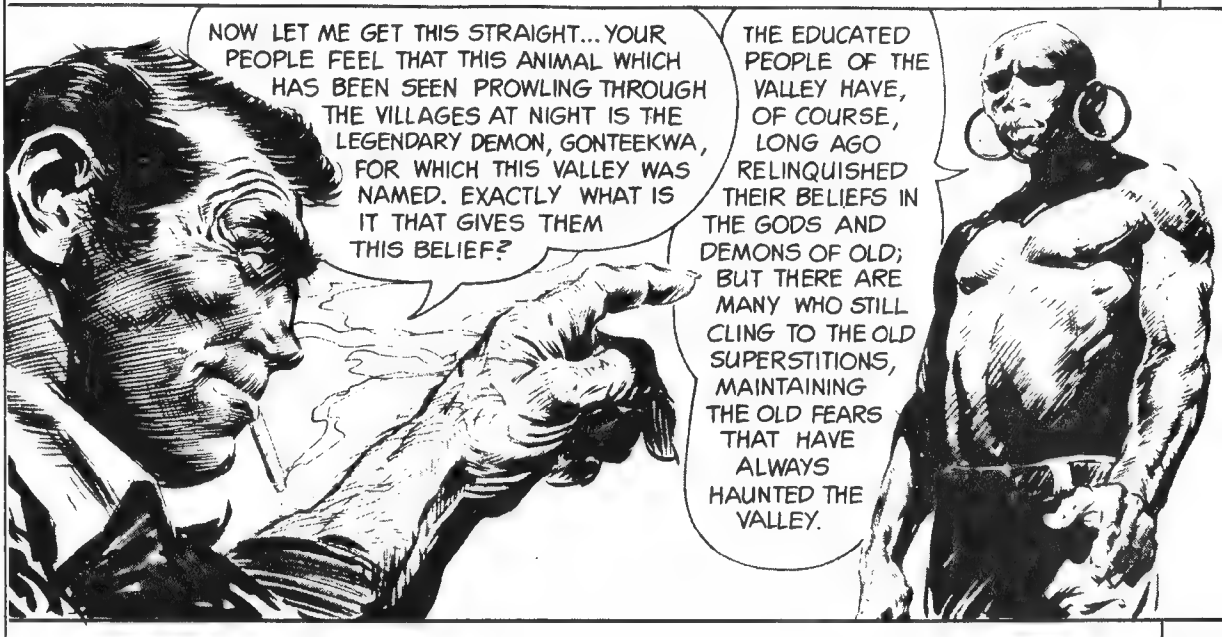
hell out!. . .you really don't belong."


NOW LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT... YOUR PEOPLE FEEL THAT THIS ANIMAL WHICH HAS BEEN SEEN PROWLING THROUGH THE VILLAGES AT NIGHT IS THE LEGENDARY DEMON, GONTEEKWA, FOR WHICH THIS VALLEY WAS NAMED. EXACTLY WHAT IS IT THAT GIVES THEM THIS BELIEF?
THE EDUCATED PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY HAVE, OF COURSE, LONG AGO RELINQUISHED THEIR BELIEFS IN THE GODS AND DEMONS OF OLD; BUT THERE ARE MANY WHO STILL CLING TO THE OLD SUPERSTITIONS, MAINTAINING THE OLD FEARS THAT HAVE ALWAYS HAUNTED THE VALLEY.

but it's honest. And if you have a statement to make, you'll make it, and if you don't make it right away, you'll make it eventually. If you have nothing to say, get the hell out! Don't pretend to be a creative artist if you're not. If you want to fake your way through it, or pretend that you're better than you are by simply ripping off people, and copying this and copying that, and then take all the credit in the world for it, you really don't belong in the field. You know the words genius and great are tossed around very lightly and very casually, and it's so much crap. I'd rather look at an artist who's technically far from perfect, but at least I look at it and I'm sure you, too, you look at it, and you say, "We know it's him, it's coming from the heart." You don't question the drawing ability, really. It's what's happening? What has he said here? I mean he's chuckling in joy. But, when you look at someone who has, for the most part, ripped the thing off in bits and parts, or *in toto*, you look and you say: "Gee, I don't know. Something about that face, something alien. It looks good, *but*." As long as you have that feeling, it takes the joy out of it. You take one look and you know. They'll even admit that it was quite freely stolen. That's the name of the game at this point. I can't stress that enough. And it is more difficult, certainly, to be totally original and creative, it's hard work. Perhaps that's the reason for it. Maybe they're lazier than I am, I don't know, but I pride myself on that.

STEVE: *That kind of honesty and creativity, that's your bottom line in painting?*

FRANK: Without a doubt. At that point, the people can begin to decide whether they like the work, or even whether it's the skill with which you apply it, your concept, or the message that you perhaps are stating or maybe your color sense, whatever it is that you've got going for you. You've gotta have something or you really shouldn't be in the field. I'm not impressed with the artists and illustrators, where hundreds of them sit around, very proudly, getting patted on the back, and they have these pictures and paintings and drawings that are obvious photographs, or bits and parts of photographs and slides that they've taken in Arizona, and horses

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"Who gives a damn? Don't you agree?"

© 1986 Frank Frazetta

that they've lifted from countless photographs in their swipe file. Granted the end result might even be spectacular, but if I feel that it's totally dishonest — that everything has a source, everything he's done there, it's not really from the heart, from the soul, from his imagination — I'm at the very least, not impressed with the artist. In quotes, "the artist" himself. I'm not fooled by that because I have that kind of eye where I recognize anything that's a photograph, or a ripoff, or just taken from somewhere. Perhaps it may be too perfect, too right, too accurate, the lighting is just too deliberate and all those things which I find less than fun. I like when the guy is guessing and poking around and reaching into his imagination and I can see the mistakes, and the lack of perfection. But the effort and the energy by the artist are, you know, what I mean. If he's got something working, I enjoy that part of it, that *ad libbing*, that creating, that making up, that reaching out to what he thinks you'll remember, what impressed him, and working hard at trying to recapture that. That's wonderful. I have nothing but respect for good artists. . . I would not be critical of his work. I wouldn't say, "well, you know, the ankle of the horse really doesn't work quite like that" — I don't care. If it seems genuinely to be working, I'm delighted, as against someone else who found a photograph. It wasn't a particularly wonderful photograph, but he used it because, what the hell, it was right. You know, boring as hell. He didn't sit there and decide that, "I want to get this feeling of great speed," and force things out of proportion, and he'd catch it, great speed. So what if the ankle's in the right place? That's nonsense. That isn't what art's all about. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about perfect duplication of what's out there. That's not what art is. You just sit there and have an image of what you *think* you saw. It's what you think you saw. And that automatically will add some quality to the work, that makes it fun, and I just resent the critics that sit there and pick things apart. I feel pretty strongly about that, the honest definition of an artist is a person who's not only a creator, but it's a person who provokes some kind of an emotional response or reaction, in people, hopefully positive, but he's also a creator; that's the key word. To me, an artist who sits there and renders things to death and is worried about perfection and recapturing life exactly as it happened, down to the minutest detail, is a draftsman, depending on the skill of the final application. I don't give two cents about that. I've been accused of rendering detail. That may be so, but I still made it up. I've created weapons that I know never existed. Horses running like I doubt that they could. Women looking like nobody I've ever seen, quite frankly, and superheroes like nobody I've ever seen. . . but I made it up. I make up the sea. I make it up, that's the fun, that's the challenge. I'm not worried. I'm not going to sit here frightened that, "Gee, maybe the rocks around Santa Barbara don't look quite like that. Let me check this out." Who gives a damn? If you're

© 1986 Frank Frazetta

incapable, where you have to refer to this, you're that much less an artist, so you're that much less a creative artist. Don't you agree?

STEVE: *Yes.*

FRANK: That's how I separate the men from the boys — those who can sit here with a blank canvas and just start doing these wonderful paintings, you know. If they're not so wonderful, they're still original.

PHOTO: Steve Bryant

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

© 1983 Vortex Comics Inc.

ALL TALK AND NO. . . LETTERS?!

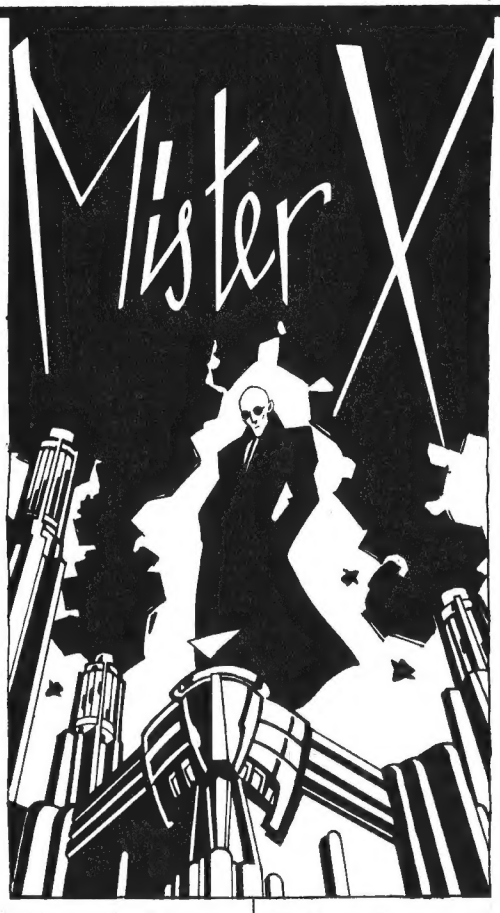
Dear David,

One thing I liked about #39 was the "group" nature of the conversations. Some interviews had more than one subject and others had an "extra" person hanging around to contribute a comment or two. Somehow, such interviews seem more "natural" than the regular one-on-one interviews. All in all, it was a nice change of pace. However, I should mention that the one-on-one interviews are generally more informative — probably precisely *because* they are more structured (and hence more "unnatural").

One thing I didn't like very much about the issue was the number of continued interviews. The one with **J. Marc DeMatteis** was part two of three, while the one with **Dave Darrigo** and **Dave Ross** was part one of two and **Dean Motter's** was "sort of" part one of two (since the next part will apparently center on **Bill Marks**, who was an "extra" in this installment). Only this last one is a legitimate multi-parter, I believe. Even so, it would probably run smoother done as one installment, since the same three people are involved. Indeed, because of its conversational nature, an interview usually does not segment nicely into pieces, thus running one in parts hinders the understanding and appreciation of the reader. In this issue, the short **DeMatteis** installment (only seven pages) should have at least been tacked onto the first or third part. Indeed, one of the other two interviews should have been run in full, with the remaining one appearing in full in the next issue.

And poor **Ann Nocenti**! Only two pages!? And it isn't even a multi-parter! Though it was marginally useful, I think that if you're going to run an interview with someone, it should be a little longer than that! At least Ann didn't have to bear the shame of having the shortest feature of the issue. That "distinction" went to the lettercol — *less* than two pages. And when I note that it was the *longest* lettercol in recent issues — well, you know what *I* think about the current sad state of what was once a lively and moderately lengthy part of CI!

If I understand **Gary Kimber's** point, he says that the 40% US-to-Canadian exchange rate is a disincentive to a Canadian using a US-based subscription service. Not so — or at least not very much so. Since US cover prices are lower, much of the exchange rate difference is made up by converting currencies. For instance, if a comic sells for US $.75 and CDN $1.00 (such as "regular" DCs do) it is actually cheaper in Canada, since US $.75 is actually CDN $1.05 (at a 40% exchange rate), but the difference is not huge, and most subscription services offer substantial discounts off cover price. Also, some comics are cheaper in the US. For instance, this is the case if it sells at US $1.50 and CDN $2.10. (All clear? Okay!)



Say, is there any chance of producing a BEST OF COMICS INTERVIEW book, featuring the most worthwhile interviews from past issues? Especially if this featured the talks with a lot of the golden and silver age creators that have been featured in CI, the collection would be a more permanent and easily accessible historical record of their pioneering contributions.

"T.M. Maple"
Box 1272, Station B
Weston, Ontario
M9L 2R9 Canada

Editorial consultant (and Marvel's SPIDER-MAN editor) Jim Salicrup and I have long discussed the possibility of a COMICS INTERVIEW compendium, so keep a look out, T.M. — you never know when we may surprise and delight you.

As for the Incredible Shrinking Letters Page, I've shared your concern — but the interviews have been squeezing the letters out, lately. We hope to remedy that, and the more spicey, intelligent or irate letters we get, the more likely the letters page will be liberated. Who knows — maybe it'll even get militant one of these days and squeeze out the interviews! Wouldn't that be a switch!

— DAK

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COMICS INTERVIEW: LETS YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING

Dear DAK,

Thanks for enlightening me to the looney-bin pleasures of FLAMING CARROT COMICS. Until you quietly hysterical interview came along with the main man himself, **Bob Burden** in the 40th issue of COMICS INTERVIEW, I'm ashamed to say I was ignorant of his work. I even had to consult the latest OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE to ascertain the publisher's name. That is, unfortunately I fear, true of a great number of independent comics titles. I guess I'm attracted to the mythos behind the two big companies at the expense of the oftimes more daring subject matter found in the smaller competitors. That is one reason why I continue to enjoy each month's issue of COMICS INTERVIEW. It let's me know what I'm missing.

So, **Mr. Burden,** even though you dislike one of the most enjoyable cartoons in television history, THE JETSONS, consider yourself in possession of one new reader, at least. Let the back issues stand tall for one and all.

Gary Kimber
2100 Bathurst Street, Apt. 101
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5N 2P2

HAMMERING OUT A STORY

In the course of researching for OPERATION ISIS [A Del Rey Book], it occurred to me that the ancient Egyptians invented the comics. Although the hieroglyphics were a picture writing, in many instances those pictures also served as phonetics, i.e., as characters of an alphabet. Fiction and history on papyrus scrolls are illustrated: party and banquet scenes portray the dancers, the musicians, the guests of the house — some drunk, some decorous. With both text and illustration in the Egyptian style, you get the entire story. And temple walls and columns are similarly garnished. Comics chiselled into masonry. Interview your composers and illustrators and see how they'd like hammer, chisel, and a cylinder of granite or limestone or what not, to do the week's comic! The Isis-Osiris-Set story may be the first myth ever recorded in the mode of today's comic.

E. Hoffmann Price
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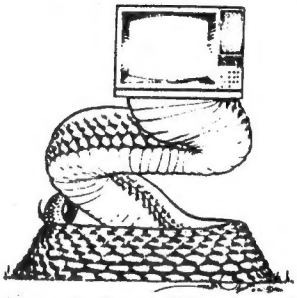
Redwood City, CA 94062

SIMONSON & McGREGOR



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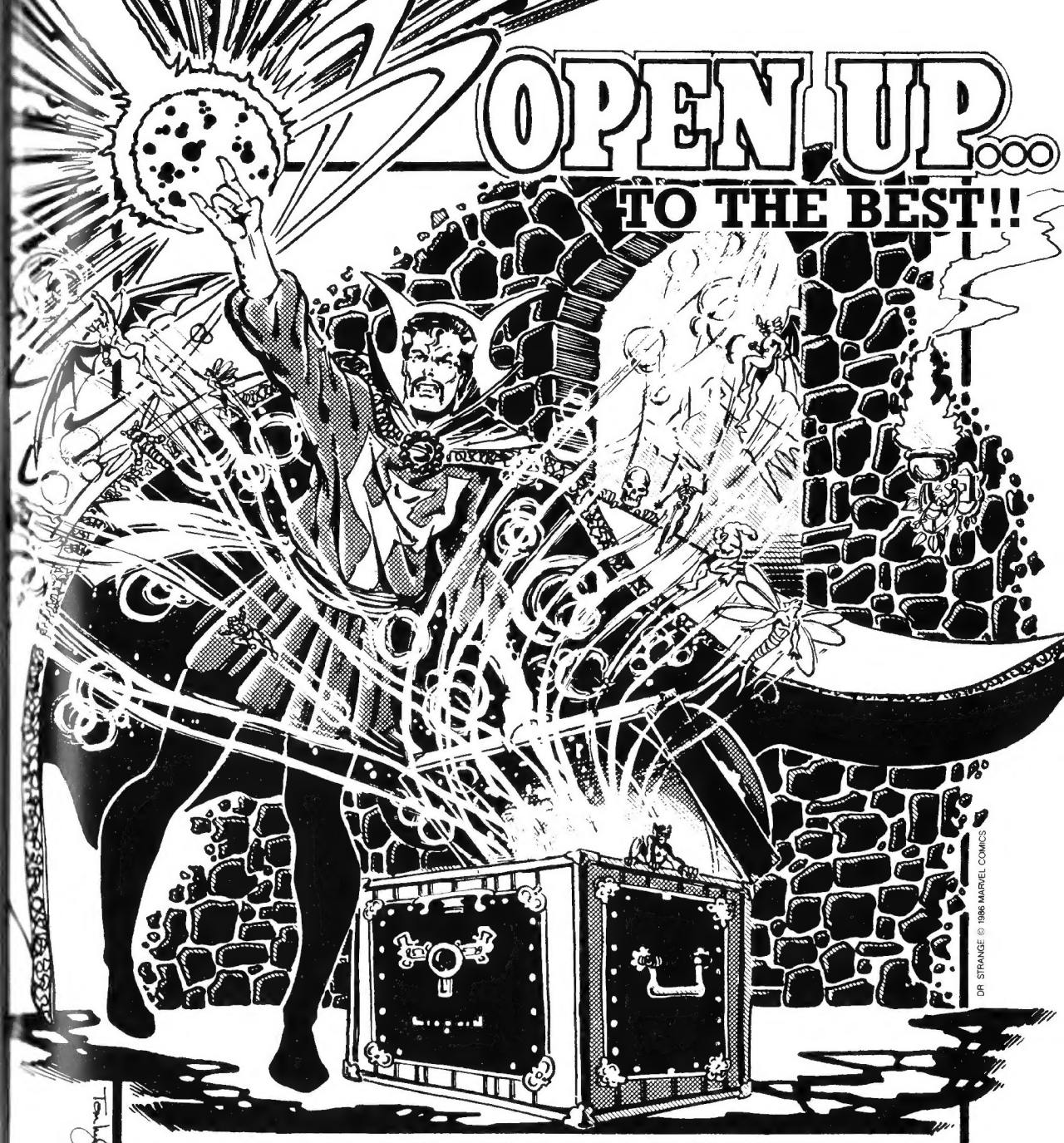
NEXT ISSUE: Will your favorite comics be banned? Publishers, retailers & distributors argue the issue of CENSORSHIP! Frank Miller has already spoken out — *strongly* — on the subject. Now hear what other important figures in the industry have to say in COMICS INTERVIEW #43!



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